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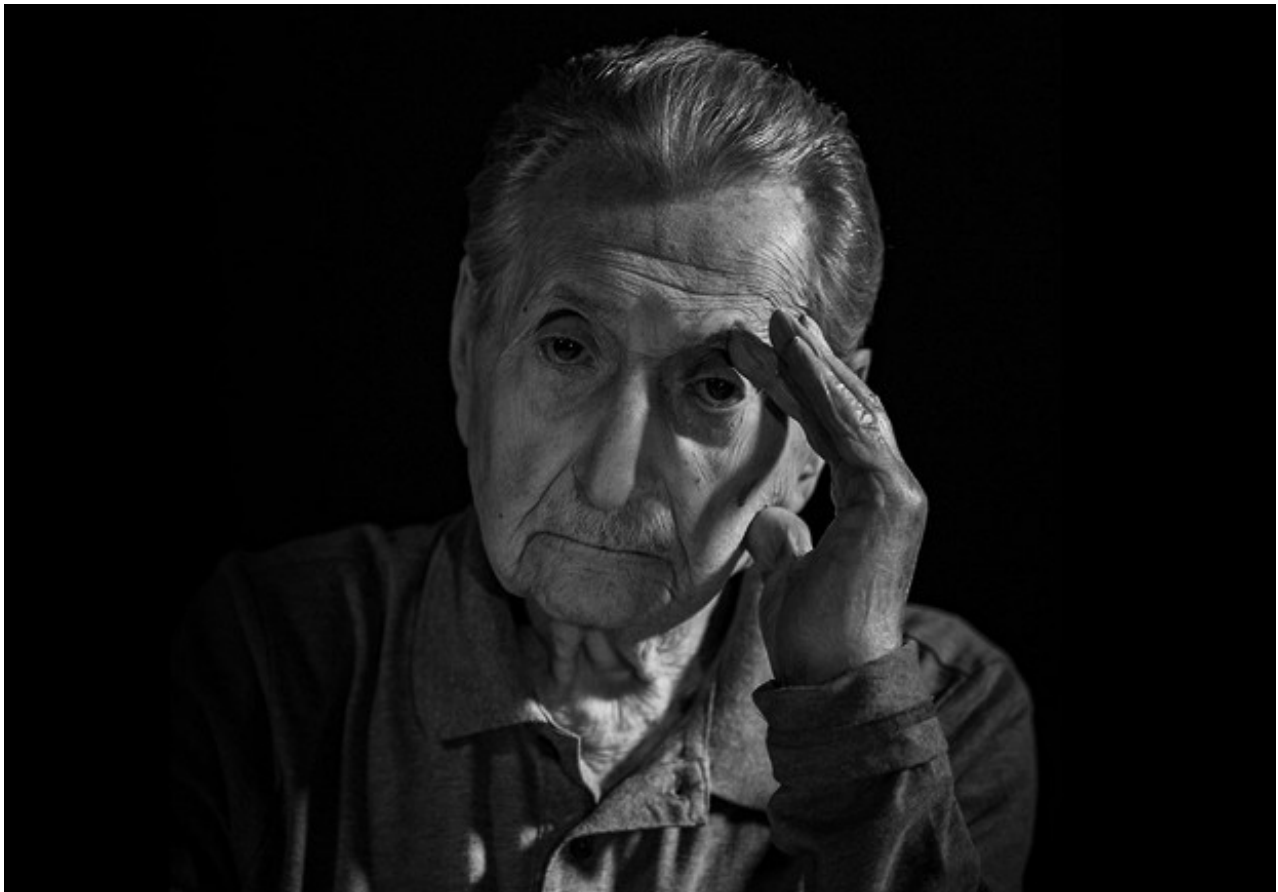
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DOCAVIV 2021

Review: *A Jewish Life*

by VLADAN PETKOVIC

06/07/2021 - Austrian directors Christian Krönes, Florian Weigensamer, Roland Schrotthofer and Christian Kermer return with a documentary that zooms in on Holocaust survivor Marko Feingold



After their EFA-nominated 2016 film *A German Life*, which consisted of an interview with Goebbels' former secretary and assorted archive footage, Austrian directors **Christian Krönes**, **Florian Weigensamer**, **Roland Schrotthofer** and **Christian Kermer** return with another documentary related to Nazism: *A Jewish Life* [+], which has just world-premiered in *Docaviv*'s Panorama.

This time around, the interviewee is Holocaust survivor **Marko Feingold**, a Viennese Jew who spent his life helping survivors reach Palestine and later dedicated himself to Holocaust remembrance. But the later, larger chunk of his life, from 1945 until 2020, when he died at 106 years of age, only takes up some 20 minutes of the 114-minute film, where he relates how, after the end of the war, he had to pretend he was working for the Italian government and bribe Austrian officials in order to send Jews over the border.

In the opening segment, the distinguished, elegant man, who looks about 80 years old, tells us that it's

probably anger that has kept him alive for so long. After describing his childhood in Vienna, with a particular emphasis on his experiences among the pickpockets and swindlers of Prater Park, and recounting a stint selling floor polish in Trieste with his elder brother, which made them rich in the 1930s, he launches straight into dispelling any notions about the complicity of Austrians in the Holocaust.

According to Feingold, Hitler was welcomed in Vienna as a saviour, not least because of the poor conditions in which Austrians had lived back then: a high unemployment rate exacerbated by a lack of food. "Some people finally had a proper portion of goulash," he admits, as well as the fact that he was there for the Fuhrer's infamous speech. He insists that Hitler would not have been so successful if anti-Semitism was not already deeply entrenched.

Another crucial thing was the automatic complicity of the police in finding and registering Jews in every country that Hitler invaded, and Feingold should know, having gone through quite an odyssey between running from Vienna to Czechoslovakia, and then to Poland, only to end up in Auschwitz as one of its first prisoners. Later, he was also imprisoned in Neuengamme, Dachau and Buchenwald.

The co-directors employ the same approach as they did in *A German Life*: a black-and-white talking-head interview in which the subject is positioned face-on in medium or full close-up, with a couple of shots from the profile, intercut with various archive footage. Sometimes, these are directly connected to his story, such as a private recording of crowds in Vienna during *Anschluss*, and at other times, they are less specific, like educational and propaganda films for the US Army. We also get a chance to read excerpts from thousands of letters of hate mail he got over the decades.

Ascetic and uncompromising, *A Jewish Life* is definitely a timely film in an era that, in many ways, seems to reflect the events of those same decades of the last century. Back then, we had neither the technology nor the awareness to warn people of the rising tides of fascism globally, but now that we do, we do not seem to have learned anything: just compare the articles in *The New York Times* from 1923 and 2021, pronouncing Hitler "virtually eliminated" after the failed "Beer Hall Putsch", and calling the Capitol riot "the end of the Trump era", respectively. Recent documentaries that warn and remind us of these dangers have indeed become more prominent, and *A Jewish Life* is a valuable addition to them.

A Jewish Life was produced by Austria's [Blackbox Films](#), and Israel's [Cinephil](#) has the international rights.

more about: [A Jewish Life](#)

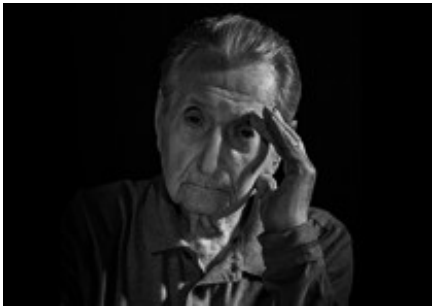


Interview: Christian Krönes and Florian Weigensamer • Directors of *A Jewish Life*

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international title:	A Jewish Life
original title:	Ein jüdisches Leben
country:	Austria
sales agent:	Cinephil (IL)
year:	2021
directed by:	Christian Krönes , Florian Weigensamer , Christian Kermer , Roland Schrotthofer
screenplay:	Florian Weigensamer , Christian Kermer , Roland Schrotthofer

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