

From ‘Concordia’ to ‘The World’s Nicest People,’ Germany Hits MipTV With Suspense and the Supernatural

By Ed Meza ▾



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Germany’s impressive crop of crime drama, mystery, suspense, apocalyptic catastrophe, royal intrigue and tales of the supernatural is certain to attract buyers at this year’s [MipTV](#) in Cannes.

The selections of series, TV movies and unscripted shows offer a wide range of content but also remain heavy on crime — a favorite German genre.

Among the new offerings is [Beta Film](#)’s fact-based title “I am Scrooge.” Produced by Zeitsprung Pictures, the Cologne-based company behind the hit Netflix spy thriller “Kleo,” “I am Scrooge” chronicles the true story of Arno Funke, a frustrated artist who found fame as a bombmaking extortionist in the early 1990s.

Identifying himself as Dagobert Duck — the German name for the Disney character Scrooge McDuck — Funke targeted some of Germany’s biggest department stores, beginning with Berlin’s KaDeWe in 1988, while continually outwitting police and even becoming a local folk hero. The six-part series stars Friedrich Mücke, Mišel Maticevic, Sonja Gerhardt and Moritz Führmann.

Director Robert Schwentke, recently in Berlin with his satiric big-screen Roman saga “Seneca,” explores a dystopian future in “Helgoland 513.” After a cataclysm plunges the world into chaos, survivors form a totalitarian society on a North Sea island that limits the number of its inhabitants to 513. Produced by UFA Fiction for Sky and sold internationally by NBCUniversal Global Distribution, the high-end, seven-part series stars Alexander Fehling, Martina Gedeck, Samuel Finzi, Antje Traue, Kathrin Angerer, Tobias Resch and Maja Schöne.

Social planning is also at the center of “Concordia,” a futuristic drama from “Game of Thrones” producer Frank Doelger and his Berlin-based Intaglio Films. Sold by [ZDF Studios](#), the six-part series centers on a utopian city powered by artificial intelligence that has improved lives, eliminated crime and powered a booming economy. Chaos ensues, however, when the AI system is hacked, a city analyst is found dead and a shocking truth is exposed that may undermine the city’s very existence.

Premiering in Cannes’ new Documentary Series Competition is Gebrüder Beetz Filmproduktion and Sky Studios’ “Juan Carlos: Downfall of the King,” an investigative documentary about the disgraced former Spanish monarch. Sold worldwide by NBCUniversal Global Distribution, the four-part series promises to be “one of the most explosive projects of the year,” according to Christian Asanger, Sky Germany’s VP of entertainment.

Writer-producer Christian Beetz adds: “When we started to produce the investigative series about the Spanish King Juan Carlos I, we were not aware of the extent of the political dimensions. Bit by bit, a network of intrigue, greed and power games unfolded, reaching into the highest circles of society and protected by the Spanish secret service CNI to this day. It is a remarkable story that we try to tell without fear or complacency.”

“Dear Vivi,” an “emotional family drama and thriller combo” from ZDF Studios, has become the most successful series on ZDFmediathek, the VOD service of pubcaster ZDF. Written and produced by Natalie Scharf, the seven-part series revolves around a family that is torn apart when the father suddenly kills his wife in the heat of the moment and ends up in custody awaiting trial. Vivi, the family’s oldest daughter, tries to take responsibility for her younger siblings while their father attempts to explain the lead-up to his terrible crime.

Telling another story of modern-day families, Caroline Link — who directed Oscar-winner “Nowhere in Africa” — explores psychotherapy for children and adolescents in “Safe.” Produced by Claussen + Putz Filmproduktion, the eight-part ZDF Studios series focuses on Berlin therapists Katinka (Judith Bohle) and Tom (Carlo Ljubek), their personal lives and their young patients. “As a director I naturally have an interest in psychology,” says Link.

The topic of psychology and children was particularly intriguing for the filmmaker’s first foray into television. “I’m a mother. I like children. I feel very connected to children. What I found very moving about this form of therapy is the attitude with which one looks at childhood, at children and adolescents,” she says.

Taking a dive into the fantastic and exploring the world of the supernatural, ZDF Studios’ new mystery series “The World’s Nicest People” is inspired by classic suspense anthology series such as “The Twilight Zone.” The six-part series tells four seemingly separate stories that share one key connection — Lill, a psychic teenager confined to her apartment due to severe allergies. Starring Hannah Schiller, Silke Bodenbender, Anton von Lucke and Sebastian Urzendowsky, the series is produced by Studio Zentral, Ungeheuer UG, NDR, ARD Degeto and BR.

Traveling back to 1917, at the height of World War I, “Davos” follows a desperate nurse who is trying to find her child in the midst of a raging battle of espionage between the world powers in neutral Switzerland.

Produced by Contrast Film and Letterbox, the six-part series is set in the Swiss resort town, where high-ranking members and political elites of all warring nations come to recuperate during the war. Brits, Germans, Russians and Italians end up neighbors as they recover in the town’s famous sanatorium, leading to high tensions and an ideal setting for spies. Sold by Global Screen, the series, which stars Dominique Devenport (“Sisi”), Jeanette Hain and David Kross (“A Stasi Comedy”), is co-produced by Amalia Film, Swiss public broadcaster SRF and ARD Degeto.

ZDF Studios also presents “Uncharted,” a six-part series from Odeon Fiction that just won six prestigious Grimme Awards. The story follows a single mother who disappears without a trace, forcing her sister Karen, a troubled soldier, to come home from an overseas assignment in Mali to take care of her nieces. At the same time, the quiet little town is overtaken by an ominous spiral of events.

Offering a strong dose of suspense is Beta Film’s “Deep Down — Every Hour Counts,” a two-part TV movie from Berlin-based Senator Film, Vienna’s Lotus Film and C-Films in Zurich for ARD Degeto, Austria’s ServusTV and Switzerland’s SRF.

Directed by Oscar-winner Jochen Alexander Freydank, the film tells the fact-based story of one of the largest cave rescues in history. When a researcher is seriously injured 1,000 meters below ground in one of Germany’s longest cave systems in the Bavarian Alps, rescuers begin an operation involving 700 people that spans 11 days.

The 10-part “Sunshine Eyes,” meanwhile, is a coming-of-age story revolving around two teenaged sisters. Directed by Maria von Heland, the Beta Film title is produced by Red Balloon Film, Maze Pictures and Tindra Film in co-production with Rotor Film.

Also boasting a big catalog of detective shows, Beta Film is likewise banking on new instalments of established crime drama movie series.

One is “The Fox,” which centers on Anne, a former East German spy who now runs a private detective agency with her partner Youssef, produced by Odeon Fiction for ARD Degeto.

Another is “Money. Murder. Zurich,” which follows a disgraced attorney who investigates financial crimes in Zurich while trying to clear his name of false accusations. Produced by Graf Film for ARD Degeto, the series is a big hit in Germany, boasting up to 7.1 million viewers and a strong 28% market share last year.

A third is “At Home in the Mountains,” set in the idyllic Harz Mountains of central Germany. It follows local village cop Frank Koops, who may be getting on in years and is no longer in the best of shape, but he knows the mountains like the back of his hand and has a knack for solving crimes that leave other investigators stumped. It is produced by Odeon Fiction for ARD Degeto.

And then there is the long-running classic anthology series “Tatort” (“Scene of the Crime”), a German cultural phenomenon and the longest-running German TV drama with over a thousand overall produced movies.