

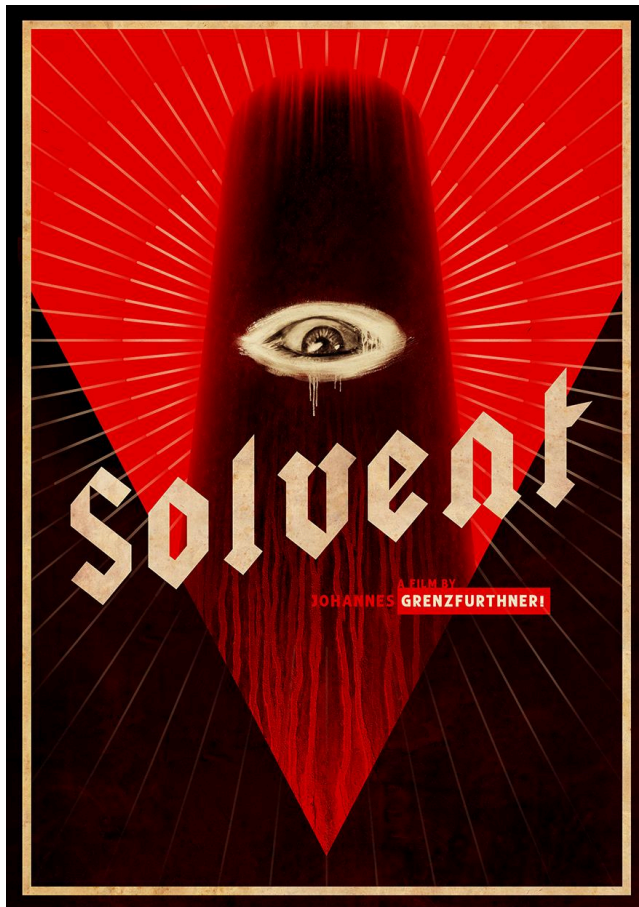
SOLVENT

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A film by Johannes Grenzfurthner

Written by Johannes Grenzfurthner and Ben Roberts

Tagline: *The Past is Never Silent.*



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While searching for Nazi documents in an Austrian farmhouse, a team of experts uncovers a hidden secret buried in its bowels. American expatriate Gunner S. Holbrook becomes obsessed with solving the mystery, and as his sanity wanes, he must confront an insatiable evil. Can he find redemption before it drains the life out of him?

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Austria, 2024. 94 minutes.

Horror/mystery/drama/comedy

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Trailer

<https://vimeo.com/1004608815>

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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. Gries's diverse body of work has solidified him as a respected character actor in Hollywood.

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 Gratzner (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. Gratzer's contributions span multiple artistic disciplines, making him a significant figure in Austria's cultural landscape.

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."

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The crew

Directed by Johannes Grenzfurthner

Written by Johannes Grenzfurthner and Ben Roberts

DOP: Florian Hofer / jetski

Edited by Anton Paievski

Produced by Jasmin Hagendorfer, Julianne Gabert, Günther Friesinger, Johannes Grenzfurthner

Executive producers: Annick Mahnert, Tom Gorai, Bill Straus, Neal Jones

Music by Pieter de Graaf

Sound design and mastering by Daniel Hasibar

Practical effects and SFX make-up by Roman Braunhofer, Thomas Mayr, Matthias Ramon Jaklitsch

Make-up by Frieda Phoenix

Poster design by Gilles Vranckx

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Director's Statement / Writer'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 Zingg, 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 Zingg'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 Zingg's story, such as the right-wing obsession with esoterica and new-age medicine. Additionally, the Nazi character initially "disappears" in 2014: 70 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.

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Images

Film stills and poster:

<https://monochrom.filemail.com/d/lqcdfrxqyusqnit>

(Photographer: monochrom)

Press image of Johannes Grenzfurthner on the set of *Solvent*:

<https://monochrom.filemail.com/d/puwkximnuoygaxk>

(Photographer: Raphael Pickl)

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Awards

Winner "The Film from Hell (Best of the Fest)" at *Nightmares Film Festival 2024*

Winner "Best Poster Design" at *South African Horror Fest 2024*

Winner "Best Feature Film" at the *Horror Underground Film & Screenplay Festival 2024*

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Quotes about Solvent

"Grenzfurthner's reliably radical (and humorous), stream-of-consciousness exploration of the Austrian psyche unfolds as a spirited and sometimes delightfully subversive POV horror grotesque, leading down into damp cellars where the slime of the past flows unchecked into the present." (Slash Film Festival)

"Sinking into the haunting shadows of history, where past sins resurface in surreal and grotesque ways, Grenzfurthner's wholly original faux-doco confronts true horror in a perversely entertaining way. You've never seen an esoteric mystery so paranoid and twisted, or the found footage format so furious and inventive. You've never seen a film like SOLVENT, period! Brilliantly (de)constructed, this breathes fetid new life into the body horror sub-genre. You will be infected." (Bryn Tilly, DNFF)

"The film hooks you from the very beginning, pulling you deep into its underworld of depravity and insanity. Each moment feels like a gamble with pure evil, and the tension builds to an

unbearable crescendo, leaving you wondering whether anyone can truly negotiate with forces so dark and extreme.“ (Surgeons of Horror)

“Solvent isn't an easy film to watch and it's sure not for the timid, however, for those who prefer their cinema uncompromising and with integrity galore there may not be a more must-see film in 2024.” (Richard Propes, The Independent Critic)

“Johannes Grenzfurthners grenzgeniale Entstellung der tiefverwurzelten Nazi-Identität des Landes.” (Uncut)

“[Grenzfurthner's] ability to charm you with humour or with a deep cut reference, only to hit you with a revelation or imagery that is jarringly upsetting is almost unmatched in horror, and that is saying a lot.” (Biff Bam Pop!)

“Solvent is a remarkably effective horror odyssey that takes us down a path of madness and refuses to let us go until the very gruesome and gory end.” (GetThatMovie by HSC)

“I love Solvent. It is one of the most remarkable films of 2024. Grenzfurthner's uncompromising artistic vision lingers (or rather: seeps) long after the credits roll, leaving a gespenstische (haunting) impression that is intellectual, emotional, and bat-shit crazy.” (Zebrabutter)

“Johannes Grenzfurthner's Solvent is a wild escapade to hell and back, delivering one of the most shocking features in a year full of shock value.” (Cinefied)

“Solvent hit me like a ton of bricks.” (Morbidly Beautiful)

“Solvent by Johannes Grenzfurthner reveals how past horrors persist today, offering a cautionary wake-up call. Gunner Holbrook's character echoes Nietzsche's warning. This unique film may not suit everyone, but it left a lasting impact on me.” (CineDump)

“Johannes Grenzfurthner reminds me of Orson Wells in the way he deconstructs filmmaking, playing with your expectations and taking hard turns into unexpected places. Grenzfurthner is such a wholly unique artist that I eagerly await anything he makes. So fucking good.” (BS Movies Podcast)

“This is a grotesque body horror film with a striking message that comes as the post-World War II global order faces its biggest stress test yet.” (Horror Buzz)

“The brilliance of Solvent rests on how deeply uncomfortable yet essential it is as a cinematic experience, daring to dive deeper into the turgid waters of wretched, poisonous ideology.” (High On Film)

“Solvent is one of those films that sticks with you. It's got this intense, unsettling vibe, blending horror with fascinating themes. The atmosphere is haunting, and the characters are complex, which makes everything feel even more real.” (Just For Movie Freaks)

“This deliriously witty, yet highly discomfoting film is a wry look at modern society's derangement. What follows defies categorization. There's horror, comedy, underground absurdity, & romance, but these genres are called upon to do more than entertain.” (Brandon Judell, Culture Catch)

“No matter how innocent or undeserving, the receiver will always be contaminated. There is no escape and no cure. It's solvent to both body and soul.” (PopHorror)

“This is a wholly original piece that uses its filming style to deliver an energetic thrill ride. You may not like where the ride is taking you...but the movie ensures that you cannot look away.” (Scare Value)

“Is there an inevitability to the kind of regressive philosophies that would rather see the world burn rather than share it or is there a chance for redemption and peace? *Solvent* doesn't provide an answer amid its horrors, but one does applaud the middle-finger it throws up as a defiant act against revulsions that refuse to back down and remain in the shadows.” (Elements of Madness)

“Welche waren die besten Filme des Jahres? [...] *Solvent*: Wo sind denn nur die alten Nazi-Dokumente im Keller vom Opa? Grenzfürhner erzählt mit internationaler Stimme (Jon Gries, bekannt aus *The White Lotus* oder der wundertollsten Komödie *Napoleon Dynamite*) eine sehr österreichische Geschichte. Lage hoffnungslos, aber nicht ernst.” (Der Standard)

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Press links

- <https://www.dreadcentral.com/news/511282/solvent-trailer-teases-mysterious-evil-in-new-pov-horror-from-johannes-grenzfurthner-exclusive/>
- <https://www.voicesfromthebalcony.com/2024/09/16/director-of-masking-threshold-and-ra-zzenest-returns-with-solvent/>
- <https://surgeonsofhorror.com/2024/09/23/solvent-2024/>
- <https://filmthreat.com/reviews/solvent/>
- <https://projectedfigures.com/2024/09/26/solvent-2024/>
- <https://rue-morgue.com/exclusive-photos-plus-trailer-solvent-a-found-footage-trip-into-a-frightening-history/>
- <https://theindependentcritic.com/solvent>
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- <https://morbidlybeautiful.com/reel-review-solvent-2024/>
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