

WHISPERS OF FREEDOM

Described by Deadline as the "tragic true story" of Chris Gueffroy, it follows one of the last daring attempts to escape across the infamous Berlin Wall.



WHISPERS OF FREEDOM

Run time: 25 minutes

Written and directed by: Brandon Ashplant

Produced by: Oscar nominee Jonathan Tammuz and Brandon Ashplant

Production company: Golden Goat Films

Cinematographer: Matthew Stockreiter

Composer: William Goodrum

Edited by: Nick Biddlecombe

Production design by: Primetime Emmy nominee Stephen Bream

LONG SYNOPSIS

During the twilight years of the Cold War young East German Chris Gueffroy (Cameron Ashplant) becomes increasingly disillusioned with life in East Berlin. After telling his mother, Karin (Wendy Makkena), that he has refused to complete mandatory military service, he convinces his friend, Christian Gaudian (Darragh Cowley), that it's time to escape westward. Believing that the shoot-to-kill policy for anyone who crosses the Berlin Wall has been lifted by Secretary-General Erich Honecker (Paul Freeman) – and having heard regular radio host Herbert Köfer (Christopher Eccleston) announce that Swedish PM Ingvar Carlsson (Thomas W. Gabrielsson) is on a state visit – the pair see a window of opportunity. They go down in history as the last to attempt the fateful escape through the Berlin Wall's infamous death strip.

INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

DEADLINE

Christopher Eccleston & Thomas W. Gabrielsson Join 'Whispers Of Freedom' About Tragic True Story Of East Berlin Escape Attempt; Filming Wraps In Germany

By [Andreas Wiseman](#), [Matt Grobar](#)
July 30, 2024 7:50am



Christopher Eccleston and Thomas W. Gabrielsson
YellowBellyPhoto/Baldur Bragason

VARIETY

Cold War Thriller 'Whispers of Freedom' Sets Principal Cast (EXCLUSIVE) – Global Bulletin

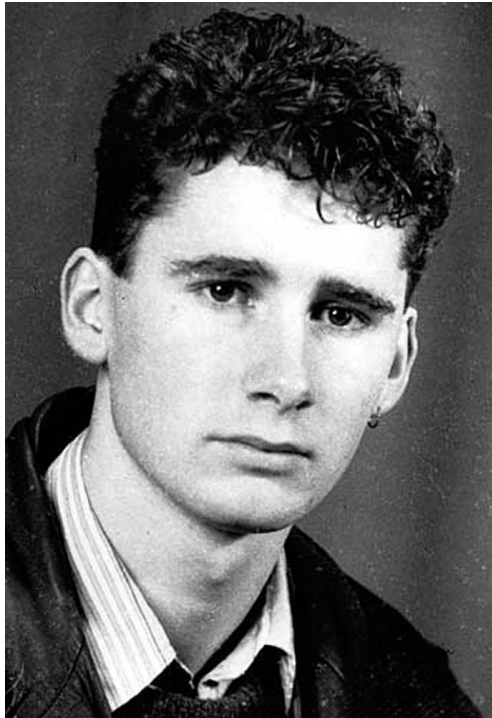
By [K.J. Yossman](#) ▾



Cameron Ashplant (Simon Annand), Darragh Cowley (Severine Howell-Merl)



THE PRINCIPAL CAST



**CAMERON
ASHPLANT
AS
CHRIS
GUEFFROY**

CAMERON ASHPLANT AS CHRIS GUEFFROY

When casting the primary protagonist in *Chris*, it was important that the actor cast had a visual likeness, but critically had a known and demonstrable track record of working in the dramatic genre, and could be trusted to tell this tragic true story well.

Cameron has portrayed a variety of characters across genres and mediums, with experience working in independent film, studio film, television and professional theatre. In recent years he has led two independent features, including the psychological thriller *Marooned Awakening* (2022) – alongside Tilly Keeper (*You*), Murray McArthur (*Wednesday*) and Tim McInnerny (*Blackadder*) – and the neo-Western *Last Flamingo of the Red Summer Sunset* (2024), which premiered at the Prince Charles Cinema in London's Leicester Square.



**WENDY
MAKKENA
AS
KARIN
GUEFFROY**

WENDY MAKKENA AS KARIN GUEFFROY

Casting the role of Karin – Chris’ mother – again not only required a degree of visual likeness, but primarily an actor who has an ability to take on the task of bringing this real person, and their true story, onto the screen.

Wendy initially trained at the Julliard School in New York City and since then has had an extensive career spanning several decades. She is perhaps best known for her portrayal of Sister Mary Robert in the *Sister Act* franchise, a role which she is set to reprise in the upcoming third installment. More recently she appeared opposite Kiefer Sutherland in Paramount+ series *Rabbit Hole* (2023), and alongside Tom Hanks in *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood* (2019).



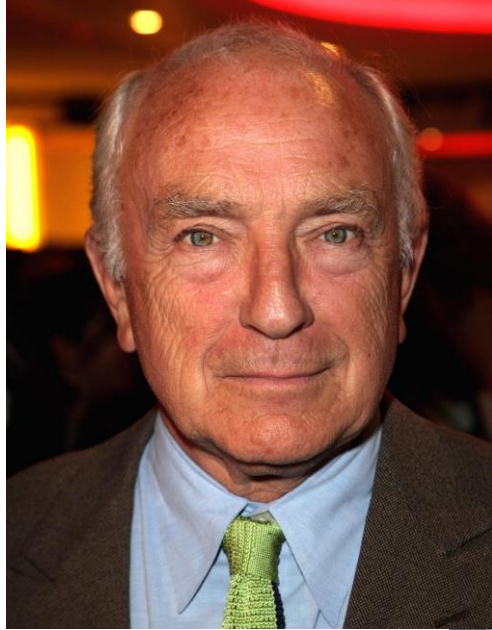
**DARRAGH
COWLEY
AS
CHRISTIAN
GAUDIAN**

DARRAGH COWLEY

AS CHRISTIAN GAUDIAN

Given that there are few publicly available photographs of Gaudian, we were less concerned with casting an actor with visual likeness. Rather, the actor needed to portray the boyish persona that the real person seemed to possess. Darragh captured this perfectly.

Darragh trained at the Guildford School of Acting. He has had a successful professional theatre career in the UK, having performed as a key part of the debut cast for *Standing at the Sky's Edge* - performing at the Sheffield Crucible, in London's West End and at the National Theatre. Other productions include *Guys and Dolls* for Sheffield Theatres; Matthew Bourne's *Lord of the Flies* at the Lowry; *Spring Awakening* at the Hope Mill; and *Snow White* at the London Palladium. His TV work includes portraying recurring character Graham in Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks-produced Apple TV+ series *Masters of the Air* and a featured role in *The Essex Serpent*.



**PAUL
FREEMAN
AS
ERICH
HONECKER**

PAUL FREEMAN AS ERICH HONECKER

Erich Honecker is – in many respects– the villain of the film. The constant state broadcasts via radio, combined with the picture portraits (of Paul Freeman as Honecker) hanging within most interior locations, exacerbates the sense of his omnipresence; the dictator has a stranglehold over this tense and stuffy society.

Paul not only bares a passing resemblance to Honecker, but also has an envious credits list of playing several notable villains – including in some of cinema’s most iconic works. Most notably, Paul portrayed Indiana Jones’ (Harrison Ford’s) arch nemesis Belloq in Spielberg classic *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981). He also portrayed Moriarty in *Without a Clue* (1988) and Ivan Ooze in *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie*. His wealth of villainous experience brings an authoritative quality to Honecker in our film.



**CHRISTOPHER
ECCLESTON
AS
HERBERT
KOFER**

CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON AS HERBERT KOFER

Herbert Köfer represents a diegetic form of narration throughout the film, to guide the audience as the narrative unfolds in tandem with noteworthy historical events, such as the State Visit of Swedish PM Ingvar Carlsson (Thomas W. Gabrielsson). Köfer was a celebrity in East Germany, and as such we wanted to cast someone recognisable to fill the role – namely to emphasise this in the minds of our modern audience.

Recognised the world-over as the ninth incarnation of the Doctor in long-running British sci-fi series *Doctor Who*, as well as portraying Malekith in the MCU's *Thor: The Dark World*, Christopher was the perfect fit. His raw talent – evident in his double BAFTA nomination – and his notable ear for accents, really brought the voice role of Herbert Köfer to life in our film.



**THOMAS W.
GABRIELSSON
AS
INGVAR
CARLSSON**

THOMAS W. GABRIELSSON AS INGVAR CARLSSON

The State Visit of Swedish PM Ingvar Carlsson is a key plot piece within the film. It represents the catalyst reason for Chris and Christian deciding to attempt their escape. Although Carlsson is never visibly seen, his voice needed to stress the urgent appeal for East Germany to implement “Soviet-style Glasnost reforms”, whilst sounding like an ordinary politician at the same time.

As a Swedish actor with incredible range, Thomas had the formal quality to his voice, but with the added sense of urgency, that the role required. He took on the voice role of Carlsson incredibly well given the limited lines he has (the least of any character!)

Thomas is perhaps best known for his performance in *A Royal Affair* (2012). More recently he played opposite Mads Mikkelsen in *The Promised Land* (2023).

THE PRINCIPAL CREW



WRITER-DIRECTOR BRANDON ASHPLANT



Born and raised on the island of Guernsey, Brandon is an actor, writer-director and producer. In addition to appearances in several short films, his acting credits include Patrick in Horror feature *Underground* (2023) and Private Daniel in independent revisionist Western feature *Last Flamingo of the Red Summer Sunset* (2024), the latter of which premiered on 2 February 2024 at the Prince Charles Cinema, Leicester Square.

His narrative short film writing-directing debut was *Bet Your Bottom Dollar* (2023), starring his brother Cameron Ashplant, alongside Paterson Joseph, and César Award nominee Marc Duret. The short picked up several accolades, including at the Budapest Film Festival and Paris International Short Festival.

PRODUCER JONATHAN TAMMUZ



Jonathan Tammuz is probably best known for directing the short film *The Child Eater* (1990), which was nominated for an Oscar for Best Short Film at the 62nd Academy Awards.

The Vancouver-based Canadian-British director and producer was also nominated for the Canadian Screen Award for Best Director at the 19th Genie Awards for his 1998 comedy road movie *Rupert's Land*.

He previously worked with Brandon, having produced his directorial debut short film *Bet Your Bottom Dollar* (2023). Jonathan was particularly excited about this project given his personal familial connections East of the Iron Curtain – with his father being born and growing up in the USSR.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS



Gordon Freiherr Von Godin – Director, DDR Museum.



Stefan Wolle – Scientific Director, DDR Museum.



Sören Marotz – Head of Exhibition, DDR Museum.



Stephen Ainsworth – Supporter of independent film.



Stephen Collas – Supporter of independent film.

COMPOSER WILLIAM GOODRUM



William is a New York composer who has worked on several notable films in recent decades. Having began his careers scoring comedy film, such as Jack Black and Gwyneth Paltrow-starring *Shallow Hal*, he has since established a strong working relationship with Italian director Edoardo Ponti. He has scored several of Ponti's works, including his 2014 Cannes-premiering short film *Human Voice*, and working on his 2020 feature *The Life Ahead*, the latter of which picked up two Golden Globes.

In developing the score for *Whispers of Freedom*, William took inspiration from old Prussian sounds, incorporating brass and string instruments to reflect the location of the film.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW STOCKREITER



Matthew studied Marine and Natural History Photography at Falmouth University, where he created his debut documentary *Grand Cayman* a 35-minute film about the critically endangered blue iguana. Since then, he has worked on a range of short and feature length narrative films as Director of Photography. He was excited to take on the challenge of *Whispers of Freedom*, with its largely interior shots and dark, artificial lighting. He lent into his background, bringing a hand-made quality to the cinematography, giving the film a tense feel. Matthew shot the film on a USSR-manufactured Helios lens, a riff on the time and setting.

PRODUCTION DESIGNER STEPHEN BREAM



A Primetime Emmy nominee, Stephen has had a long-spanning career, working as Art Director across a range of productions. Notably, he worked as Art Director for *Mission: Impossible III* .

Recreating the former East Germany for *Whispers of Freedom* was no easy task. A small team of carpenters and set builders refitted the interiors of several buildings, to Stephen's liking, to ensure the architectural style aligned with the brutalist standards of 1980s East Berlin. The Gueffroy apartment was transformed to look like the interior of a standard plattenbau. Having the DDR Museum lend some of its items and objects improved the set dressing immeasurably. Production also took place on location in the former East of Berlin, which was transformed back to its former communist appearance with some adjustments by Stephen.

EDITOR NICK BIDDLECOMBE



This is Nick's editorial debut.
A dream fulfilled.

With a background as a graphic designer, having moved into film post-production as a colourist and VFX artist, Nick has dreamed of cutting a film. He received advice from Xavier Box, who recently edited Angelina Jolie's *Without Blood* (2024).

HISTORICAL ACCURACY



It was incredibly important to us that Chris' surviving family members are not only aware of the project but gave us their consent to make the film.

Whilst – understandably – Karin Gueffroy did not wish to be involved personally; we believe we have a duty to tell the story as historically accurate as possible. As such, we were fortunate enough to receive support and guidance from several respected and notable German historians and institutions who specialise on the topic of the former East Germany, including the Berlin Wall Memorial and the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship.

CONSULTANTS AND ADVISORS



Dr. Sabine Kuder, Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship – Historical Consultant.



Dr. Sarah Bornhorst, Berlin Wall Memorial – Historical Consultant.



Katja Hoyer, author of *Beyond the Wall* – Lead Historical Adviser and Technical Consultant.



John Whitby, accomplished film and television military consultant – Military Adviser.

CAMERON WENDY DARRAGH PAUL CHRISTOPHER THOMAS W.
ASHPLANT MAKKENA COWLEY FREEMAN ECCLESTON GABRIELSSON

WHISPERS OF FREEDOM

A BRANDON ASHPLANT FILM

PRODUCED BY ACADEMY AWARD NOMINEE JONATHAN TAMMUZ



GOLDEN GOAT FILMS PRESENTS A BRANDON ASHPLANT FILM

CAMERON ASHPLANT WENDY MAKKENA DARRAGH COWLEY PAUL FREEMAN CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON THOMAS W. GABRIELSSON

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS WILLIAM GOODRUM MAISIE BISSON NICK BIDDLECOMBE STEPHEN BREAM MATTHEW STOCKREITER STEFAN WOLLE

PRODUCED BY JONATHAN TAMMUZ BRANDON ASHPLANT DIRECTED BY BRANDON ASHPLANT