

And the ones who were just unlucky.

# THE PROTAGONIST



120 WATT MEDIA PRESENTS A CHRISTIAN DAI DUONG BORCHERS PICTURE "DER PROTAGONIST" DARIOS VAYSI ANASTASIA MAZHARA XIDUO ZHAO  
JONATHAN FINK MUSIC BY VEIT VERGARA COSTUME DESIGNER JUSTINA SNOW ZABLOCKYTE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY FLORIAN SCHMID WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY CHRISTIAN DAI DUONG BORCHERS

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## LOGLINE

24 hours in the life of a cleaner, two skateboarders, and a woman in blue pajamas intertwine as four stories about an urn, karma, too much lipstick - and it's all just because of a red plastic bag.



## SYNOPSIS

Four protagonists, whose stories are entangled: the skateboarder, Frank; his best friend, Gonzo; the woman in blue pajamas, Kim; and the cleaner, Khoung.

**FRANK'S STORY:** When the skateboarder, Frank, finds a red bag with white powder in a stranger's backpack, he keeps it. In doing so, he unknowingly sets off a chain reaction which will cost him his life.

**KHOUNG'S STORY:** After a botched job, without a weapon, the cleaner Khoung finds himself in an empty subway station. An arrow is lodged deeply in his ribs and he can barely breathe. The journey home seems impossible.

**KIM'S STORY:** Alone in her room, Kim observes a man with a briefcase and a gun through the keyhole. He approaches her and the only way out is blocked.

**GONZO'S STORY:** After a quick stop at a kebab shop, Gonzo finds his best friend, Frank, dead in the apartment with a hole in his head. At the same moment, he receives a call from Frank.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As producer, screenwriter, and director, I was looking for a story I could tell using simple and limited resources, given our significant financial constraints. The story of a friendship between two skateboarders living in the projects seemed like a good starting point. I wanted to make a film that was fun, lighthearted, and would leave you smiling.

I was inspired by 80s adventure films like *Back to the Future* and *Indiana Jones*, the films of my childhood. I loved these films for their lightness and humor. It was thrilling to watch the heroes' adventures, always knowing everything would be okay in the end.

As I got older, I realized that certainty never really existed. Most of the time, not everything turns out okay. Adventure means, above all, the possibility of failure.

In *The Protagonist*, each of our main characters fails in their own unique way. Our actions often have profound and devastating consequences, not only for ourselves, but also for those around us.

The heroes of my story are not perfect moral creations, but quite the opposite: they steal, manipulate, keep secrets from each other, and even kill. And yet we sometimes see a human glimmer shine through the rough exterior: when the cleaner Khoung lets Gonzo go with the red bag, when we're (almost) positive that Gonzo will never sell the mix of cocaine and his dog's ashes.

*The Protagonist* isn't my biography; I have never experienced exactly what these characters experience. However, the world of the film is familiar to me: the high-rise apartment blocks, the concrete, the people you've got to steer clear of, and Vietnamese culture.

I come from a German-Vietnamese family. My grandmother is Vietnamese, my grandfather German. I grew up and experiences the world in the midst of these two cultures. To this day, both cultures are simultaneously familiar and yet foreign to me.

I remember my grandma patting me on the head and smiling as I'd leave the house. I remember sharing meals with my many aunts and uncles a child, trying to listen but not understanding anything. Through the story of Khoung the cleaner, I could transport some of my memories into the film, and in doing so, process them for myself in a new way.

The unusual structure of the film arose from the desire to follow each main character as long as possible, without repeating anything. The resulting cliffhangers serve as a necessary dramaturgical device to maintain the tension. To facilitate a chronological understanding, their individual stories overlap briefly.

It was very important for me to have a positive ending, or at least one that could be perceived as such. A small consolation before the future. An attempt to delay the impending doom, just a bit longer. Even though Frank dies in the middle of the film, we end the story with a living and breathing main character. And beyond that, this character's adventure is just beginning, with a naive, childish anticipation of the future (even if nothing good is coming). But this one moment is worth living. Let's enjoy the sun together one last time before everything goes downhill.

## CREW BIO

### **CHRISTIAN DAI DUONG BORCHERS**

Writer/Director/Producer

Christian Dai Duong Borchers was born in 1984 in Dresden, Germany. He left his hometown after studying Musical Composition at Dresden's "Carl Maria von Weber" Musical Conservatory to work as an assistant photographer in Berlin and Paris. He then worked as a professional photographer for a decade, for Rolling Stone, Intro, and Visions, among others.

In this time, his focus turned to film directing and writing. In 2017, he created his first short film, Calla, followed by "10-37", a 15 minute short film for the theater production Serenade für Nadja (Theater Oberhausen), and Calma, a short dance film in collaboration with dancer and choreographer Azahara Sanz Jara.

Since 2021, Christian Dai Doung Borchers has worked as a video artist for various theaters (Schauspielhaus Leipzig, Theater an der Josefstadt, Staatstheater Mainz, Theater Oberhausen) and operas (Oper Frankfurt, Bregenzer Festspiele, Theater an der Wien), with the directors Amélie Niermeyer, Ebru Tartici Borchers and Vasily Barkhatov, among others. During this time, he also wrote the feature film script Hopper – The End of the Sun, which reached the semifinals of the 2020 Cinequest Screenwriting Competition. In 2023, he wrote the script for the feature film The Protagonist. Filming took place in July 2024 in Vienna, Austria. Post-production was completed in September 2025.



## **JUSTINA SNOW ZABLOCKYTE**

Costume

Justina Snow Zablockyte is a Lithuanian-born costume designer and fashion writer currently based in Vienna. After studying Fashion Design in Lithuania, she spent the past decade working on international film productions, from independent cinema to large-scale BBC projects. Alongside her work on set, Justina continues to write for fashion publications and contributes critical insights informed by her knowledge of fashion history.



## **VEIT VERGARA**

Music

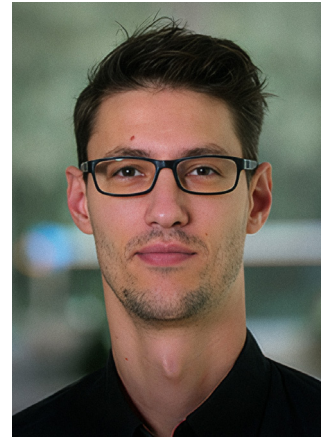
Veit Vergara is a German composer currently based in Salzburg, Austria. With Bavarian and Ecuadorian roots, his musical journey began at school and has now included big band, rock groups, and classical ensembles, reflecting a lifelong exploration of diverse styles. He further expanded his artistic range through master's degrees in both Composition and MultiMediaArt. Veit connects classical compositions with elements of rock, pop, electronic music and world music, creating a unique soundscape for every occasion. He has worked on numerous films, theater pieces, concerts, and installation projects.



## **FLORIAN SCHMID**

Director of Photography

Florian Schmid is a Director of Photography based near Vienna. After completing his studies in Media Technology, he gained over ten years of experience in 3D animation, special VFX, and post production. He then transitioned into the film industry and has since been working successfully as a freelance cinematographer. His diverse portfolio includes commercials, branded content, and music videos. More recently, he has developed a strong interest in the creation and execution of narrative fiction projects, continuously expanding his creative scope.



## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **DARIOS VAYSI**

as Gonzo

Darios was born in 1994 in Athens and grew up in Frankfurt. He is a native Greek speaker, a passionate swimmer addicted to salt water, and always has music on his mind. He is the first of two sons of Greek-Persian parents, who met in Germany in 1990. A bilingual school and one of Frankfurt's many immigrant neighborhoods taught him ambition and a deep enthusiasm for people. He studied at Mozarteum acting school in Salzburg, Austria. He has now been an ensemble actor at the Oldenburg State Theater for three years and is looking forward to the future.



## **ANASTASIIA MAZHARA**

as Kim

Anastasiia Mazhara is a Ukrainian actress based in Berlin. She studied acting at the Ukrainian Film School and later at the Konrad Wolf Film University in Babelsberg. Fluent in English, German, Ukrainian, and Russian, she works in film, television, and onstage. Anastasiia has appeared in several short films and TV productions, often in leading roles. Recent credits include *Why the North?*, *A Nook of One's Bliss*, *To Kill a Man*, and *WIR DREI*. She also played roles in German TV series, including *SOKO Leipzig* and *Polizeiruf Rostock*. Currently, she is filming *Mavka*, directed by Kateryna Tsaryk. Onstage, she was part of the ensemble at Hans Otto Theater for the mystery thriller *Concord Floral*, directed by Lilli-Hannah Hoepner, from October 2022 to April 2023.



## **XIDUO ZHAO**

as The cleaner Khoung

Born in 1994 in the Chinese province Jilin (even Google Maps doesn't know the exact place), Xiduo Zhao came to Germany at four years old and was raised in a German-Italian-Chinese patchwork family in Würmtal, near Munich. Following his father's example (who deeply regrets his son's decision and secretly hopes his son will still become a civil servant), he turned to the arts and studied at Munich's Zerboni Acting School. Today, you can see him in German film and television or hear his voice as a dubbing artist for international productions.



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## **JONATHAN FINK**

as Frank

Jonathan Fink was born in 1995 in Karlsruhe and grew up in Munich. He studied acting at the Academy of the Arts in Bern, graduating with an M.A. in 2024. During his studies he acted at Theater Basel, including in Wilhelm Troll (Direction: Jörg Pohl), which was invited to the Author's Theater Festival at Berlin's Deutsches Theater, and in Pferd frisst Hut, an opera by Herbert Grönemeyer directed by Herbert Fritsch, which was shown at the 2024 Ruhrtriennale. In summer 2024, he played one of the main characters (Frank) in the film The Protagonist, directed by Christian Borchers. Since the 2024/25 season, he is a permanent ensemble at the Theater St. Gallen in Switzerland.



## TOP CREDITS

**GONZO** DARIOS VAYSI  
**KIM** ANASTASIIA MAZHARA  
**FRANK** JONATHAN FINK  
**KHUONG THE CLEANER** XIDUO ZHAO  
**LOUIS** AARON HEROLD  
**MIKEY** BEHRAD BEH NEZHAD  
**A YUE** ANNE ZHAO  
**PARKPLATZ MANN** DANIEL ROTH AUG  
**TOMMY** IGOR KARBUS  
**PHILLIPO** CEDRIC STERN  
**GOTHIK MANN** ALI AYKAR  
**TRIXI** JEANNE-MARIE BERTRAM

**PRODUZIERT VON** CHRISTIAN DAI DUONG BORCHERS

**1.REGIEASSISTENZ** MYRIN SUMNER  
**2.REGIEASSISTENZ** NIKOLAUS STADLER

**SCRIPT/CONTINUITY** PAULA LANGE

**1.KAMERA-ASSISTENZ** CHRISTIAN CONCHA  
NITHU SIVA  
**2.KAMERA-ASSISTENZ** DAVID SCHNEIDER  
NITHU SIVA  
**STEADY CAM OPERATOR** BASTIAN KÖHN

**TONMEISTER** PHILLIP SCHWALM  
**TONASSISTENZ** JAKOB JELOSITS  
FELIX LUI  
DAVID SCHNEIDER

**SETKOSTÜM** MONA KOKOSCHKA  
**MASKE** MONA KOKOSCHKA  
MELANIE KAPONIG (WASCHSALON)  
**SFX MAKE UP** MONA KOKOSCHKA  
JO JORDAN (RESTAURANT)

**SZENENBILD/REQUISITE** CHRISTIAN DAI DUONG BORCHERS  
**SZENENBILDASSISTENZ** SANDRA KALLAY  
PAULA LANGE

**TONMISCHUNG /SOUNDDESIGN** JULIUS KREINHÖFER  
LUCA DOMRÖSE

**RE-RECORDING MIXER** DENNIS GRELL

**SCHNITT** CHRISTIAN DAI DUONG BORCHERS

**COLORGRADING** CHRISTIAN DAI DUONG BORCHERS

**STUNT COORDINATOR** BEHRAD BEH NEZAHD

**SCHUSSWAFFEN TRAINING** ALFRED FORSTNER

**SETRUNNER** FELIX LUI  
DAVID SCHNEIDER  
NITHU SIVA

**SETFOTOGRAF** DAVID SCHNEIDER  
NITHU SIVA

**ÜBERSETZUNG UNTERTITEL** NOEMI BERKOWITZ

**CATERING** EBRU TARTICI BORCHERS

## CONTACT

[www.christianborchers.com](http://www.christianborchers.com)

[christian.borchers@gmail.com](mailto:christian.borchers@gmail.com)  
Münichreiterstr. 44/Top 8  
1130 Vienna  
Austria

Tel: 0043 681 208 649 56



## TECHNICAL DETAILS

Running Time	79 minutes
Directed/Written/Produced by	Christian Dai Duong Borchers
Cinematographer	Florian Schmid
Composer	Veit Vergara
Costume Designer	Justina Snow Zablockyte
Aspect Ration	2,39:1
Format	easy DCP
Resolution	Scope 4096 x 1716

