

**ZURICH  
FILM  
FESTIVAL**

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Films starring Dwayne Johnson, Jodie Foster, Matthew McConaughey, Matthias Schweighöfer, and Anke Engelke at the ZFF

Zurich, August 14, 2025

Every year, the Zurich Film Festival presents eagerly awaited highlights of arthouse cinema in its «Gala Premieres» section, including Hollywood gems with Oscar potential. Ten titles announced today include **THE SMASHING MACHINE** with Dwayne Johnson and **A PRIVATE LIFE** with Jodie Foster, as well as three major world premieres from Germany.



From September 25 to October 5, 2025, the 21st Zurich Film Festival will present spectacular works of auteur cinema with broad audience appeal in the «Gala Premieres» category.

«In the «Gala Premieres» section, the ZFF often shows films that will later receive Oscar nominations,» explains **Festival Director Christian Jungen**. «Many films this year feature leading actors and actresses who are breaking new ground: **Dwayne Johnson** shows himself to be a delicate character actor in the role of a wrestler in the sports drama **THE SMASHING MACHINE**, while **Jodie Foster** returns to a ranch auteur cinema for the first time in over 20 years in **Rebecca Zlotowski's** captivating relationship drama **A PRIVATE LIFE**, speaking French herself. In Nia DaCosta's **HEDDA**, **Tessa Thompson** ignites the screen as Hedda Gabler, a brilliant, untamed force of nature whose fierce independence collides with the suffocating confines of her time. **Matthias Schweighöfer** shines in **THE LIFE OF WISHES** in the role of a middle-aged man, revealing the inner life of his protagonist as never before in his career. We are particularly proud to be able to present three prestigious German productions as world premieres: **THE LIFE OF WISHES**, **TIME WE LOST** and **MOMO**.»

The complete program for the 21st ZFF will be published on the website on Thursday, September 11, at 12-midday (CEST). The latest festival information can be found on the ZFF social media channels. Ticket sales will start on Monday, September 15, 2025.

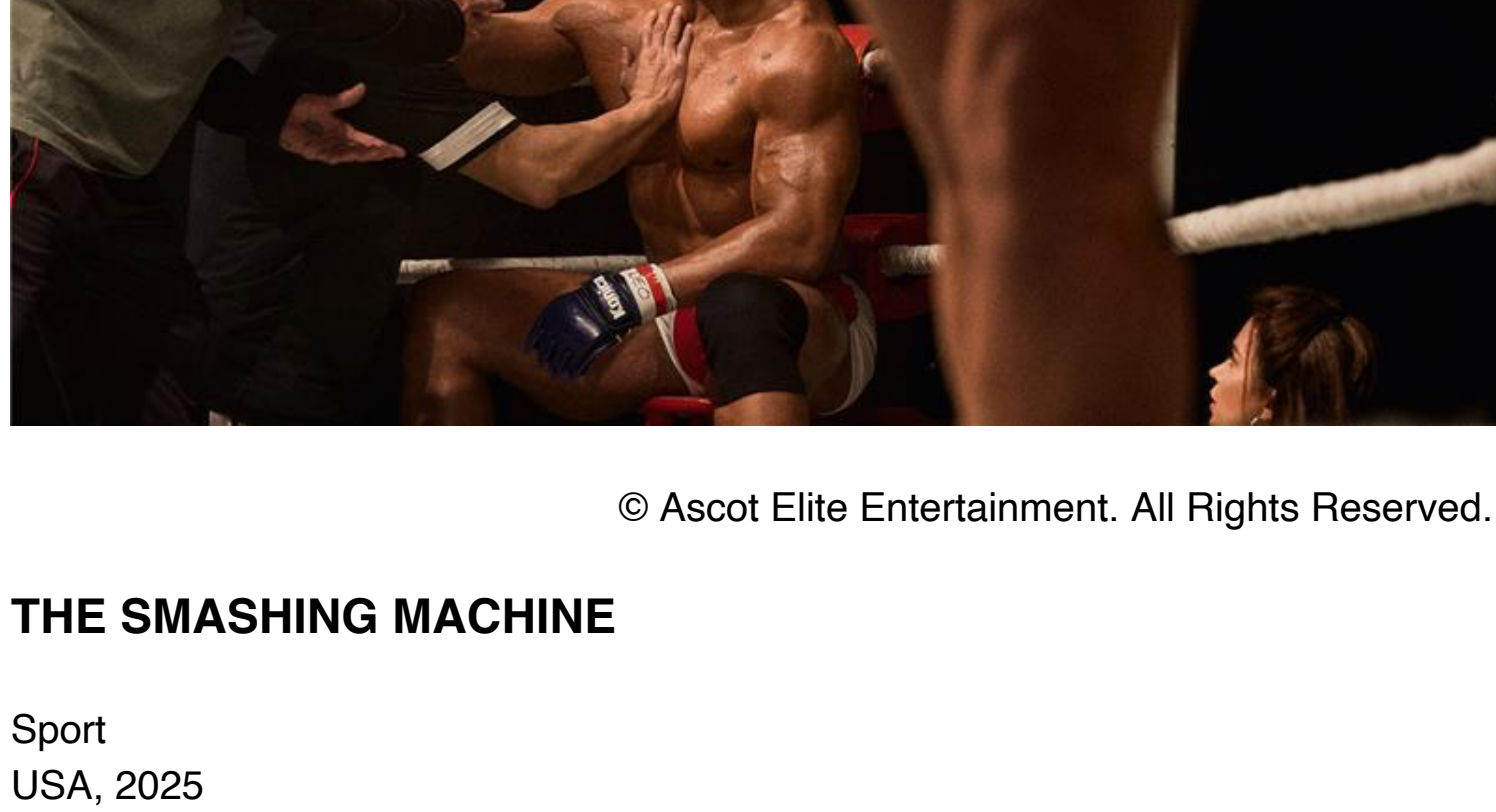


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#### THE LOST BUS

**European Premiere**  
Action / Drama  
USA, 2025  
**Director:** Paul Greengrass  
**Cast:** Matthew McConaughey, America Ferrera, Yul Vazquez, Ashlie Atkinson

From director Paul Greengrass and inspired by real events, **THE LOST BUS** is a white-knuckle ride through one of America's deadliest wildfires as a wayward school bus driver (Matthew McConaughey) and a dedicated school teacher (America Ferrera) battle to save 22 children from the terrifying inferno.



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#### THE SMASHING MACHINE

Sport  
USA, 2025  
**Director:** Benny Safdie  
**Cast:** Dwayne Johnson, Emily Blunt, Bas Rutten, Ryan Bader

Fan favorite Dwayne «The Rock» Johnson takes on the role of legendary MMA fighter Mark Kerr, offering a deep dive into the troubled life of a man who keeps fighting, even when no one is watching. Kerr, an icon of the early UFC era, stands at the peak of his career while teetering on the edge of destruction – a life caught between fame and self-destruction. Former Playboy model and Kerr's wife Dawn Staples, played by Emily Blunt, tries to support him through all the setbacks, but finds herself pushed to her own limits. This is an unflinching look behind the facade of a fighter, and a role that sees Dwayne Johnson reinvent himself as the **ROCKY** of a new generation.



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#### HEDDA

**European Premiere**  
Drama  
USA, 2025  
**Director:** Nia DaCosta  
**Cast:** Tessa Thompson, Nina Hoss, Imogen Poots, Tom Bateman, Nicholas Pinnock

From writer and director Nia DaCosta comes a provocative, modern reimagining of Henrik Ibsen's classic play. **HEDDA** (Tessa Thompson) finds herself torn between the lingering ache of a past love and the quiet suffocation of her present life. Over the course of one charged night, long-repressed desires and hidden tensions erupt – pulling her and everyone around her into a spiral of manipulation, passion, and betrayal.



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#### TIME WE LOST

**World Premiere**  
Drama  
Germany, Austria, 2025  
**Director:** Neele Leana Vollmar  
**Cast:** Anke Engelke, Ulrich Tukur

Hans, a school principal nearing retirement, feels more like a guest in his wife Rita's life. Their son left home long ago, and their long marriage follows a well-established routine set by Rita. And as far as she is concerned, there is no reason to change anything. In fact, she doesn't like change. The new tiles in the bathroom are just the beginning of something that's starting to worry Rita. Suddenly, old wounds resurface. Suddenly, the two realize how little they know about their son's life. Suddenly, there is this emptiness in their lives. Suddenly, it is no longer clear whether they are two individuals or a couple. But then life happens...



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#### THE LIFE OF WISHES

**World Premiere**  
Drama  
Germany, 2025  
**Director:** Erik Schmitt  
**Cast:** Matthias Schweighöfer, Luise Heyer, Verena Altenberger, Benno Fürmann, Henry Hübchen, Ruby O.Fee

Felix (Matthias Schweighöfer) finds himself at a dead end in both his family life and his career. His wife Bianca (Luise Heyer) wants a divorce, his children are drifting away from him, and his hair is thinning. When he loses his job, Felix finds himself on the brink of disaster. Then a mysterious stranger (Henry Hübchen) offers him three wishes. Felix seizes this last hope of getting his family and his job back – and with them, a sense of purpose in life – and formulates a supposedly clever wish: that all his wishes come true. And suddenly he gets what he's always wanted – success at work, a full head of hair, and love back in his life. However, beneath it all, his hidden wishes begin to surface. Felix is drawn deeper and deeper into the vortex of his darkest desires and is forced to confront his subconscious longings, before discovering that there is only one true wish for him.



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#### A PRIVATE LIFE

Thriller  
France, 2025  
**Director:** Rebecca Zlotowski  
**Cast:** Jodie Foster, Viorique Eflra, Mathieu Amalric, Daniel Auteuil, Vincent Lacoste

Lilian, a psychiatrist who has moved from New York to Paris, begins to lose her footing – both professionally and emotionally – after one of her patients takes her own life. After years of therapy, what did she really know about this woman? Through self-hypnosis, she delves into the world of the woman who died, only to discover it is deeply intertwined with her own life.

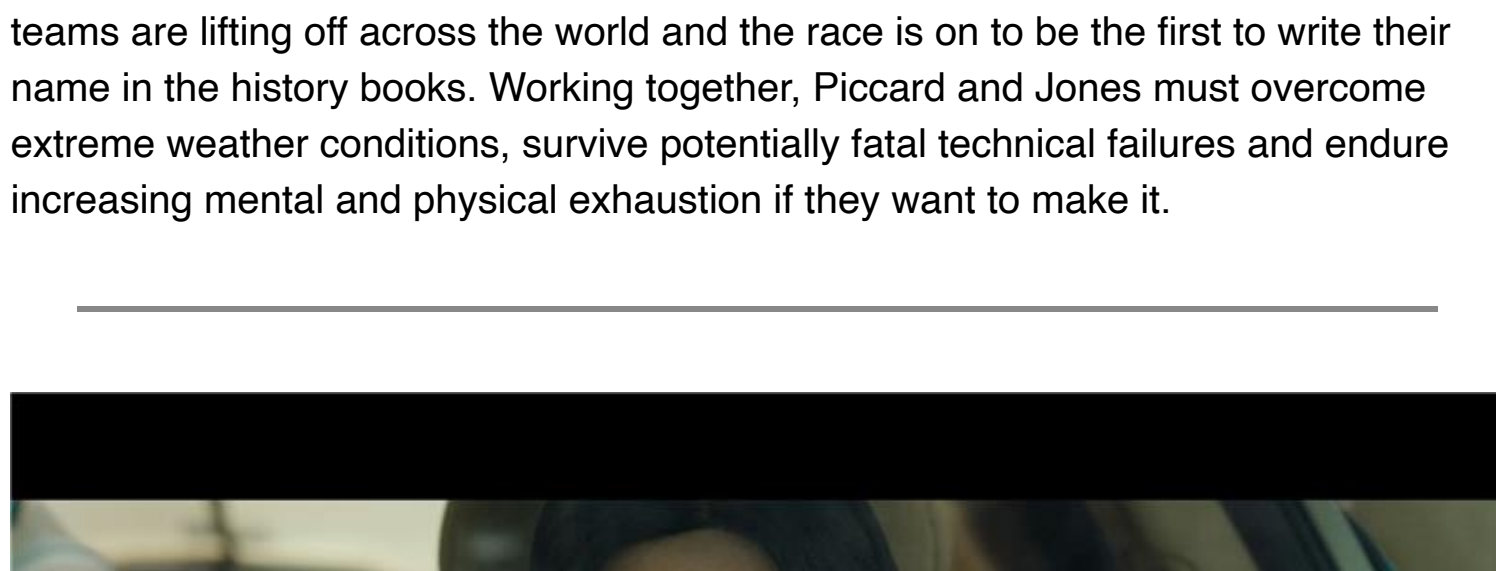


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#### THE BALLOONISTS

**European Premiere**  
Documentary  
USA, UK, Austria, 2025  
**Director:** John Dower  
**Cast:** Brian Jones, Bertrand Piccard

In the winter of 1999, Swiss explorer Bertrand Piccard and British flight instructor Brian Jones embark on an attempt to complete the last great aviation challenge of the 20th century – to circumnavigate the globe, nonstop in a hot-air balloon. Rival teams are lifting off across the world and the race is on to be the first to write their name in the history books. Working together, Piccard and Jones must overcome extreme weather conditions, survive potentially fatal technical failures and endure increasing mental and physical exhaustion if they want to make it.

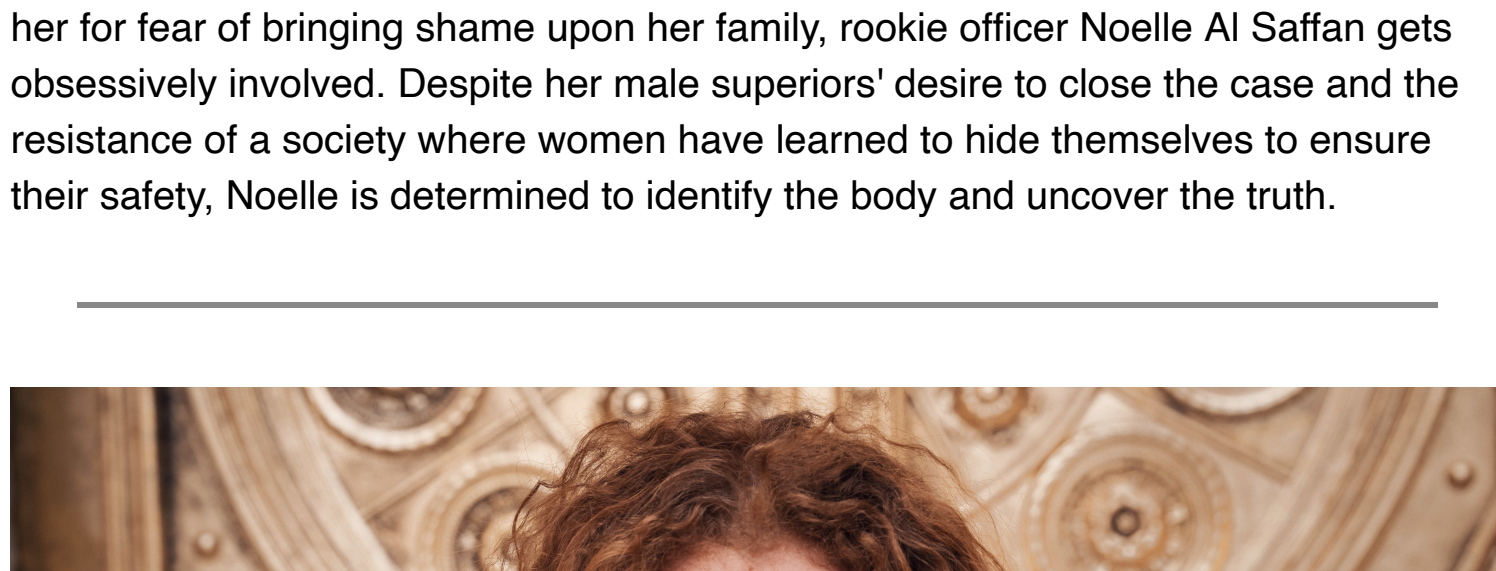


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#### UNIDENTIFIED

**European Premiere**  
Mystery / Thriller / Crime Drama  
Saudi Arabia, 2025  
**Director:** Al Mansour  
**Cast:** Mila Al Zaharani, Shafiq Al Harthi, Aziz Gharbawi, Fatima Sharif, Adwa Al Asiri

The lifeless body of a teenage girl is discovered in the desert. When no one claims her for fear of bringing shame upon her family, rookie officer Noelle Al Saftan gets obsessively involved. Despite her male superiors' desire to close the case and the resistance of a society where women have learned to hide themselves to ensure their safety, Noelle is determined to identify the body and uncover the truth.

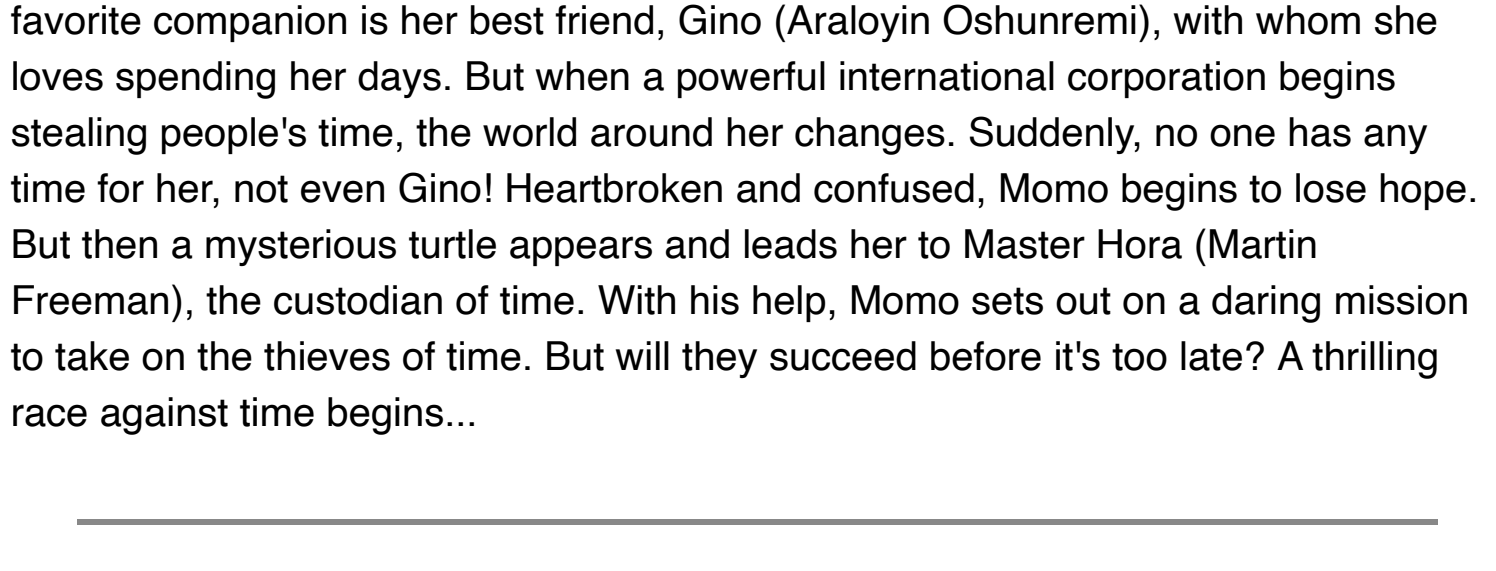


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#### MOMO

**World Premiere**  
Family Entertainment  
Germany, Croatia, Slovenia, 2025  
**Director:** Christian Ditter  
**Cast:** Alexa Goodall, Martin Freeman, Araloyin Oshunremi, Kim Bodnia, Claes Bang, Laura Haddock, Jennifer Amaka Pettersson, David Schütter

The young orphan girl Momo (Alexa Goodall) lives in the ruins of an ancient Roman amphitheater and is always ready to listen to the concerns of those around her. Her favorite companion is her best friend, Gino (Araloyin Oshunremi), with whom she loves spending her days. But when a powerful international corporation begins stealing people's time, the world around her changes. Suddenly, no one has any time for her, not even Gino! Heartbroken and confused, Momo begins to lose hope. But then a mysterious Gintle appears and leads her to Master Hora (Martin Freeman), the custodian of time. With his help, Momo sets out on a daring mission to take on the thieves of time. But will they succeed before it's too late? A thrilling race against time begins...



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#### I'M NOT STILLER

**International Premiere**  
Literary Adaptation  
Switzerland, Germany 2025  
**Director:** Stefan Haupt  
**Cast:** Alexia Goodall, Martin Freeman, Araloyin Oshunremi, Marie Leuenberger, Stefan Kurt, Sven Scheiker, Marius Ahrendt, Simon Vischer

While traveling by train through Switzerland, American James Larkin White is arrested at the border. The accusation: he is believed to be the sculptor Anatol Stiller, who disappeared seven years ago and is wanted in connection with a murky political scandal. White denies the charges and insists he is not Stiller. In an effort to confirm his identity, the authorities call on Stiller's wife Julika for help. But even she is unable to definitively identify him. As memories resurface, the complex relationship between the couple begins to unfold. Meanwhile, the prosecutor reveals an unexpected connection to the missing man. What really happened back then, and who is Stiller really?

#### Zurich Film Festival

The Zurich Film Festival (ZFF) is the second largest festival in the German-speaking world. Over 11 days in autumn, it presents the greatest discoveries and the year's most anticipated movies. The ZFF promotes exchange between upcoming directors, established filmmakers, the film industry and the general public. In the last 20 years, the festival has attracted a total of 1.35 million visitors: 500 of the 2,300 films screened celebrated their world or European premiere at the Zurich Film Festival.

**The 21st edition will take place from 25 September to 5 October 2025.**

**Weitere Informationen:** [Zurich Film Festival](#)

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