

Berlin: Lisa Weber on Empathy and Courage in Her Panorama Doc 'Running on Empty'

By [CHRISTOPHER VOURLIAS](#)



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Nineteen-year-old Claudia lives with her mother, brother and four-year-old son in a public housing complex in Vienna, with no job, no prospects on the horizon, and the present slipping by in a series of uneventful days. But in “Running on Empty,” which premiered Feb. 25 in the Panorama section of the [Berlin Film Festival](#), director Lisa Weber finds a family capable of evoking empathy, laughter, shock and love as they struggle to make ends meet.

Following Claudia and her family for more than three years, Weber eschewed the tawdry voyeurism of reality TV for a documentary approach that offers a revealing portrait of her protagonists, while exploring all that happens in daily life when nothing really seems to be happening.

Weber spoke to *Variety* in Berlin about the long genesis of her movie, the challenge of putting a boundary between her and her subjects, and the universal truths revealed by her intimate approach to filmmaking.

You met Claudia in the courtyard of the building complex where she’s lives many years ago, when she was only 11. How did that relationship evolve as you decided to make a movie about her life?

The truth is, I was just a very, very curious girl [at the time], when I was 19. I was right out of school, and it felt like the world is mine. Before I started film academy, I was running through the streets with my little camera, and filming everything that was interesting to me. When I met [Claudia], I already had a little camera with me. I was always

