



KGP PRESENTS A FILM BY RUTH MADER  
 FRITZ KARL KATHARINA LORENZ FLORIAN TEICHTMEISTER

# LIFE GUIDANCE



*I'll be better than me  
 I reach for the limit  
 'Cause everyone is free to choose  
 That is optimal, that is optimal!*

*I am my future  
 I reach out  
 I grow beyond my potential  
 That is optimal, that is optimal!*

**Credits**  
 KGP Kranzelbinder Gabriele Production  
 Starring: Fritz Karl, Katharina Lorenz,  
 Florian Teichtmeister  
 Directed by Ruth Mader  
 Written by Ruth Mader and Martin Leidenfrost  
 Producer: Gabriele Kranzelbinder  
 Director of Photography: Christine A. Maier  
 Editor: Niki Mossböck  
 Original Score: Manfred Pleschl  
 Production Design: Renate Martin,  
 Andreas Donhauser / Donmartin Supersets  
 Costume Design: Tanja Hausner  
 Make-Up Design: Michaela Payer  
 Original Sound: Heinz K. Ebner  
 Sound Design: Nils Kirchoff, Karim Weth  
 Sound Mix: Alexander Koller  
 Title Design: Alexander Dworsky  
 Line Producer: Stephanie Wagner  
 Casting: Marion Rossmann

**Technical Data**  
 Original Title: Life Guidance  
 Genre: Futuristic Thriller  
 Year of Completion: 2017  
 Country of Origin: Austria  
 Duration: 101 min  
 Original Language: German  
 Subtitles: English  
 Colour  
 Format: DCP  
 Screen Ratio: Scope 1:2.39  
 Audio: 5.1 and Dolby Atmos  
 Frame rate: 24p

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**Press Downloads:**  
 www.lifeguidance.at  
 www.kgp.co.at

www.lifeguidance.at



*That is optimal*

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## Synopsis

The Film is set in the near future, in a world that has achieved a perfected state of capitalism. Society is sustained by a class of top achievers. These cheerfully motivated people populate a bright, friendly, transparent and efficient middle-class world. Meanwhile, so-called minimum recipients live under sedation in Fortresses of Sleep. The great majority of top achievers view themselves as happy and self-fulfilled. An out-sourced agency has been established for the rest: Life Guidance is charged with turning these individuals into optimal people as well. Alexander is a member of the middle class and works in the financial sector. Like the others, he has internalized the system. But one wrong word to his child is enough to trigger Life Guidance. An agent from Life Guidance counsels him about attaining his optimal potential and increasingly encroaches on Alexander's life. Alexander starts to rebel and soon encounters the horror of the system in all its brightness and affability.

*That's not optimal, Dad!*

*A lax attitude can be fatal.*



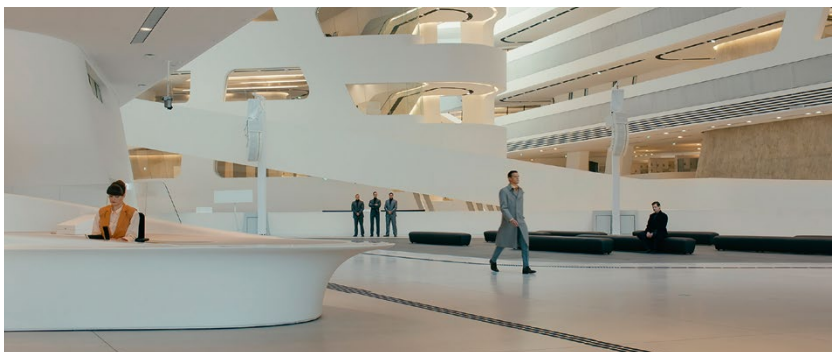
*I see your accomplishments.*



## Director's Statement

The sun is shining, parents love their children, in Autumn the leaves fall from the trees. Everything is as always, at first sight. And yet *Life Guidance* leads us into a future that bears disturbing resemblance to the present day. Our attention focuses in on the prevailing value system of tomorrow. *Life Guidance* is a dystopia of the future, extrapolated from current developments. The horror it instills does not depend on the strangeness of *Life Guidance*, but rather its similarity to our world. Human freedom comes to an end within a framework that includes everything currently familiar: the liberal democracy of today, the financial capitalism of today, the technocratic elite of today. The conditions for *Life Guidance* have already been met.

Ruth Mader



*I have to pull myself together.*

*Does God exist after all?*

## LIFE GUIDANCE

The plotline of the film is straightforward: In a society controlled by an anonymous power, a man searches for the authority exercising this control. Perhaps the man simply wants to come to terms.

In the beginning, a camera smoothly glides through the world of a small affluent family, scoping a luxurious residential landscape, expensive furniture and elegant clothing – as impersonal as in a "Better Homes and Gardens" magazine. But suddenly the doorbell rings and an uninvited stranger stands in the middle of the living room, offering to help optimize the family father's attitude towards life, since he apparently does not satisfy the prescribed standards: 100% motivation to improve performance, adaptive contentment, etc. The presence of the stranger is a threat, an encroachment on the safe zone of domestic privacy, and this trespass instills fear. Fear is the most effective means to also eliminate the ability of people to pay attention to one another, to establish solidarity. The intruder employed by the Life Guidance agency will soon no longer bother to ring the doorbell, he will simply be present, omnipresent, the controlling organ of a totalitarian power.

If not already apparent, flaws in the perfect surface of things now become noticeable. What kind of society is this anyway? How do these people live? Who is responsible for this perverse order; why are there no traces of family life? And there are no communication technologies to be seen – no television, laptop or smartphone. Any form of informational exchange is prohibited; emotions are taboo. The camera reveals subtle incongruities, hints of irritating inconsistencies. Even a single tear is 'suboptimal' while uncontrolled weeping means final social downfall, culminating in a death sentence. Absolute isolation prevails.

The system – who or whatever it may be – is omniscient. Perhaps the people themselves have become the program and simply move about in their scenes by remote control. A suspicion along these lines sets in, there is enough evidence to support it – or not? It is never clear on just what level of reality we find ourselves.

The rulers know their subjects' most intimate desires and nightmares, can perfectly stage them and even shamelessly replay them medically. People no longer know what their own life



*Don't get upset because you don't like the system! People like you keep it running!*

is, whether they are not already caught in their personal horror scenarios which they are performing 'for real'. They have allowed themselves to be seduced by the most banal materialistic rewards: the bigger, better, and more luxurious promised by omnipresent advertising slogans, and a total blocking out of the underprivileged – of course we are dealing with a class-based society.

This is a highly charged, political film and it is radical, like all the works made by its director, Ruth Mader. *Life Guidance* is based on a fictional model of society. However, it becomes highly disturbing when events presented as science fiction all of a sudden come dangerously close to actual reality. The people in the film live in a world where an absolute societal meltdown has already come to pass – we are on the brink of one.

Birgit Flos

## Ruth Mader



Studied directing at Film and Television Department of University for Music and Performing Arts in Vienna. Graduated with Distinction from Michael Haneke's Master Class.

1999 awarded Max Ophüls Prize for her short film *Gfrasta*.

Invited to Official Selection of Cannes Film

Festival four times, participating in 2001 Cinéfondation section with *Null Defizit*; in 2003 Un Certain Regard section debuting Mader's first feature film *Struggle*; in 2005 Tous les Cinémas du Monde section with *Gfrasta*; and in 2007 presenting her screenplay *Serviam – Ich will dienen* in the L'Atelier series.

In 2012 Mader's film *What Is Love* premiered in the Forum section of the Berlin International Film Festival.

Numerous international awards include the International Critics' Prize (FIPRESCI Prize) and a nomination for Cannes' Caméra d'Or.

In 2017, her feature film *Life Guidance* celebrates its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival, competing in the Giornate degli Autori section.

## Filmography

*Life Guidance* (Futuristic Thriller, 2017)  
*What is Love* (Documentary, 2012)  
*Serviam* (Thriller, screenplay, 2007)  
*Struggle* (Feature, 2003)  
*Null Defizit* (Short Film, 2001)  
*Gfrasta* (Short Film, 1998)  
*Ready For What* (Documentary, 1997)  
*Kilometer 123,5* (Short Film, 1994)  
*Endstation Obdachlos* (Documentary, 1992)

## Cast

### Fritz Karl

Theater and film actor. Study in Dramatic Arts at Max Reinhardt Seminar Vienna, followed by theatrical engagement at Vienna's Volkstheater and Theater in der Josefstadt. Participation in numerous theater, film and television productions. Awarded Max Ophüls Prize, nominated for Bavarian Television prize, and awarded the Romy for Most Popular Actor.

### Katharina Lorenz

Upon completion of Theater Studies at the Otto Falckenberg School of the Performing Arts in Munich, theatrical engagement at the Munich Kammerspiele. Member of Vienna's Burg Theater ensemble since 2008. Performed in numerous feature films, awarded Best New Actress by Theater Today.

### Florian Teichtmeister

Graduated from Max Reinhardt Seminar, subsequent theatrical engagements including Vienna's Volkstheater. Teichtmeister acted in various feature films and performs as an ensemble member at the Theater in der Josefstadt, as well as at the Salzburg Festival. Teichtmeister twice received the Nestroy Audience Award and was distinguished with the Karl-Skraup-Prize for Best Emerging Actor as well as Germany's Best Actor award.

## KGP Kranzelbinder Gabriele Production



We are an independent film production company located in Vienna (founded in 2001 under the name of Amour Fou and operating as KGP since 2007).

KGP's name is synonymous with author driven film as well as with experimental cinema and the avant-garde. We are interested in filmmakers and their unique visions

beyond any limitations of content or format. We want to produce films that are emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually engaging. We tell stories and invite our audience to come on a journey with us to experience all aspects of human existence and the huge potential of cinema.

We strongly believe in close partnerships with our directors, writers and all other collaborators. KGP successfully works with international filmmakers of all genres. Our films exhibit at all major festivals (Cannes, Berlin, Venedig, Locarno, Toronto etc.) and have won numerous awards.

## Selected Filmography

*Life Guidance* (Ruth Mader, Futuristic Thriller, AT 2017)  
*How We Live* (Gustav Deutsch, Documentary, AT 2017)  
*Home Is Here* (Tereza Kotyk, Feature, AT/CZ 2016)  
*Lou Andreas-Salomé* (Cordula Kablitz-Post, Feature, DE/AT 2016)  
*Fly Away Home* (Mirjam Unger, Feature, AT 2016)  
*La Supplication* (Pol Cruichten, Documentary, AT/LUX 2016)  
*Uncanny Valley* (Paul Wenninger, Animation Short, AT/FR 2015)  
*Bad Luck* (Thomas Woschitz, Feature, AT 2015)  
*We Come As Friends* (Hubert Sauper, Documentary, AT/FR 2014)  
*Grand Central* (Rebecca Zlotowski, Feature, FR/AT 2013)  
*Shirley – Visions Of Reality* (Gustav Deutsch, Feature, AT 2013)  
*Trespass* (Paul Wenninger/Nick Hummer, Short Film, AT 2012)  
*Museum Hours* (Jem Cohen, Feature, AT/USA 2012)  
*What Is Love* (Ruth Mader, Documentary, AT 2012)  
*Tender Son* (Kornél Mundruczó, Short Film, HU/DE/AT 2010)  
*Love And Other Crimes* (Stefan Arsenijevic, Feature, SRB/DE/AT/SLO 2008)  
*Ezra* (Newton I Aduaka, Feature, FR/AT 2007)  
*Crash Test Dummies* (Jörg Kalt, Feature, AT/DE 2005)  
*Struggle* (Ruth Mader, Feature, AT 2003)