



THE LONELIEST MAN IN TOWN (2026)

BERLINALE ★★★★★

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Author: Meredith Taylor

Dirs: Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel | Cast: Alois Koch, Brigitte Meduna, Flurina Schneider | Austria – 90' – 2026

Blues musician Al Cook (aka Alois Koch, 1946-) lives in Vienna, surrounded by memories in his spacious mansion flat. A fan of Elvis and the 'rockabilly' music of the 1950s his apartment and basement studio are crammed full of books, videotapes and vinyl records – all that remains of a life once fully lived, although the man is still occasional performing his music, even today. Far from being a bore, Al's quiet confidence is appealing.

Directors Tizza Covi and Rainer Frimmel paint a mournful picture of Al's life, but he is philosophical and considers the solid walls and classical architecture of his home a welcome sanctuary, reflecting his emotional

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Beyond the four walls the musician calls home, the world has moved on. The building has been sold to developers, and is due for demolition. Most of Al's neighbours have already moved out but Al is adamant to stay. During his lonely Christmas celebration there's a power cut. After a visit to the local housing authority Al finds out that these menacing tactics will continue, along with other measures designed to force him out.

Then a visit from a weird couple claiming to be building managers turns sinister. Al is given two months to move out, if he accepts the offer on the table. It's a direct threat. The offer will not be so 'generous' the week after.

At first Al Cook (playing himself) presses on undeterred. But when one of the new owners starts to turn up each day making a nuisance of himself, bizarrely letting himself into Al's flat, raiding the larder and snoring on the sofa, it's clearly time to go.

The blues musician bites the bullet. He visits a travel agent planning a trip to Memphis USA, where he aims to reinvent himself as a jobbing jazz musician. Meanwhile he sells his belongings. A young film fan takes an interest in the projector. An American woman chooses his life-size china animals; her dog excited to find new friends. Then Al bumps into an old girlfriend and shares his future plans. After a haircut and new clothes, Al invites her to go to the famous Metro cinema and later, over tea, she offers her home as a refuge for his stuff, and an offer he can't refuse.

The Loneliest Man in Town is, of course, an ironic title, a prime example of how passionate interests and plans for the future keep us going throughout, projecting positivity, drawing people towards us, creating our own good luck. Beyond the subject of music, Al's determination and zest for life shines out, serving as his vital motivator, in this bittersweet Vienna-set documentary that makes a worthwhile companion piece to Gaston Solnicki's 2025 title *The Souffleur*

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