

"EKLIPSE"



By Matthew Turner September 5, 2026



THE STORY – Tomy and his best friend Chris spend the summer of 1999 at an alpine dairy. They help Tomy's uncle with the milking, build a dam and explore the great outdoors. While the boys are discovering new worlds, Tomy's mother decides to continue keeping the real reason for his father's hospitalisation a secret from her son.

THE CAST – Moritz Hohlrieder, Finley Brown, Hannes Perkmann, Lenz Moretti, Lisa Schützenberger, Barbara Romaner, Michael Pascher, Sebastian von Malfèr & Lisa-Lena Tritscher

THE TEAM – Manuel Wetscher (Director/Writer) & Bernhard Jarosch (Writer)

THE RUNNING TIME – 91 Minutes

This rural coming-of-age drama is the accomplished debut feature from Austrian co-writer-director Manuel Wetscher, who based part of the story on his own family experience. Featuring remarkable performances from its two young leads, the film is a tender exploration of adolescence, and the crushing impact of social stigma. Set in the Tyrolean Alps in Austria, the film stars Moritz Hohlrieder and Finley Brown as Tomy and Chris, respectively, two young adolescent boys who are both cousins and best friends. Over the course of a summer in 1999, they spend their time on Tomy's uncle's Alpine farm, milking cows, building dams, and generally spending time in nature. They also occasionally spy on a sexually active couple in their twenties who are also employed to help on the farm. However, there is a dark secret hanging over the family. Tomy's mother has shielded him from the fact that his father, Frank, is very ill in hospital, and when Chris finds out from a local farmer that Tomy's dad has "the gay disease", he becomes frightened and confused, and his behavior threatens to destroy their friendship.



Wetscher gets remarkable performances from both his young actors, resulting in a natural chemistry between them that's entirely convincing. Hohlrieder's Tomy is perhaps the more worldly of the two (although not by much) and that dynamic plays well on screen, as their play-fights become ever more disturbing – spitting is always a pretty horrible thing to watch on screen and the introduction of that element to their playful scraps adds a shade of darkness. By contrast, Brown's character undergoes more of a coming-of-age journey, as he's plunged into confusion after hearing about "the gay disease" and the sudden intrusion of the adult world knocks him for six. Physically, he's slighter than Hohlrieder, which makes him seem more vulnerable, both physically and emotionally, something that's highlighted in the contrast between the two boys' reactions when they're watching the couple have sex ("Don't be so gay", Tomy remarks).

The film is effectively centered on the perspective and the experience of the two boys, which means that adults are very much on the edges of the story. To that end, Lisa Schützenberger delivers a thoughtful supporting turn as Tomy's mother, whose withholding of the truth is arguably responsible for everything that happens. However, the boys' perspective means that her realization of that fact is not explored, which deprives the film of a more dramatic emotional climax.

Wetscher's direction is extremely impressive throughout. In particular, he creates a strong sense of time and place, as well as accentuating the pastoral nature of the farm and its surroundings through detailed pastoral scenes, such as the milking of the cows. He's aided by Simone Hart's striking cinematography, which makes rich use of the landscape, and by some excellent sound design work. The pastoral scenes are given further significance by the use of inserted VHS footage, highlighting certain plants or natural elements in the countryside. The use of the VHS format adds an element of nostalgia to the story, consistent with the 1999 setting. (In fairness, it's not immediately obvious, and the audience has to work hard to pick up the year). Wetscher also has a strong affinity for the film's coming-of-age elements, which are nicely handled. The sex scene, witnessed by both boys in secret, is very effective – it's as sudden and shocking for the audience as it is for the boys, because it's so unexpected.

Thematically, the film delivers a strong message about social stigma and the destructive nature of ignorance. That element is drawn from Wetscher's personal experience; according to the press notes for the film, his father died of Kaposi's sarcoma – a cancer caused by AIDS – in the early 1990s, and he only learned about it years later, as his family tried to protect him from social discrimination. On a similar note, the film stops short of explicitly suggesting that either Tomy or Chris might be developing homosexual feelings, but there is distinct ambiguity in their performances, leaving the audience to make up their own minds. To that end, there are echoes of Lukas Dhont's "[Close](#)," which has both a similar rural setting and a close relationship between two young adolescent boys.

Given the film's title, it's a little odd that the eclipse itself doesn't feature more heavily in the film. However, it does occasion one of the film's best scenes, when Tomy explains to Chris how the Earth and the Moon both orbit the Sun, using rocks to illustrate the planets. It's a beautifully directed sequence, heightened by Hohlrieder's physical performance and the elaborate swirling motions he makes with his hands. This is a striking debut for Wetscher, perfectly capturing the pain and confusion of intense adolescent friendships, as well as the disruptive intrusion of the adult world into innocent childhoods. It will be fascinating to see what the director does next.

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