

VENICE 2024 International Film Critics' Week

Review: *Peacock*

by [SUSANNE GOTTLIEB](#)

31/08/2024 - VENICE 2024: In his feature debut, Austrian director Bernhard Wenger satirises the societal construct of a personality, making full use of the understated acting by Albrecht Schuch



Albrecht Schuch and Julia Franz Richter in *Peacock*

If something were to define the opening few minutes of *Peacock*, it would be the perfectly symmetrical wide shots – a controlled and perfectly curated gaze. Controlled and curated, such is also the life of Matthias (**Albrecht Schuch**), who takes centre stage during these shots. His existence is a tranquil haven of peace, with an aura of absolute zen around it – but it is soon to unravel. How it does so is the central conflict in Austrian director **Bernhard Wenger**'s feature debut, which has premiered in the [International Film Critics' Week](#) at the 81st [Venice Film Festival](#).

What Matthias offers in these first impressions is not a quick rundown of the man he is; rather, these are the personalities he takes on. Matthias works at a company called “My Companion – Friend for Hire”, taking on the

role of the perfect partner for any occasion, in any situation, whether that means posing as the son of embittered old money, pretending to be the music-loving date of an older lady, or even helping a woman learn how to fight with her husband.

Yet in private, there does not seem to be much of a personality to speak of. When his girlfriend, Sophia (**Julia Franz Richter**), asks him what wine he wants to drink, he answers, "Whatever you prefer." When the question crops up of whether one would step in in a physical fight, he can offer no stance, but only truisms. For some relationships, this might be an ideal scenario for a no-conflict zone. For Sophia, it is the end. "You're not real any more," she tells Matthias before she leaves him.

This might sound familiar to those who are familiar with Wenger's work: a passive man left by a woman, to be left stumbling through the ever-more confusing ramifications of the situation, was already the set-up for his short film *Excuse Me, I'm Looking for the Ping-pong Room and My Girlfriend*. Once again, here, Wenger employs his dry, accentuated humour that tip-toes around the surreal, at times traversing genres into horror scenarios.

But *Peacock* is a movie in its own right, and the viewer gets to watch Matthias, who on the surface seems capable of playing the role of a new singleton to a T, but struggles with the mental implications. Without a counterpart to interact with, he is lost, condemned to his own thoughts. It is time he started dealing with himself and his problems, even his friend and colleague David (**Anton Noori**) tells him. But no rental dog, no affair and no spiritual cleansing seem to do the trick. Like the peacock at the retreat facility, Matthias will have to deal with his vanity and reject the notion of flawless perfectionism around him, in order to truly find himself.

Part of why *Peacock* works so well are Schuch's chameleonic qualities, the blow-dried hairstyle with blond highlights and the moustache making him look like a well-groomed TV salesman. With his understated acting, controlled posture, soft voice and the bare minimum of emotion, he becomes something to project onto, an empty vase. No matter what over-the-top scenarios Wenger throws at him, he grabs them and plays them straight, further enhancing the satire. The humour on this (anti-)hero's journey does not stem from quips or slapstick, but rather from the tragic realities of life's absurdities.

Peacock was produced by Austria's [Nikolaus Geyrhalter Filmproduktion](#) and is distributed internationally by [mk2 Films](#).

more about: Peacock



Review: *Peacock*

VENICE 2024: In his feature debut, Austrian director Bernhard Wenger satirises the societal construct of a personality, making full use of the understated acting by Albrecht Schuch ▶

31/08/2024 | Venice 2024 | International Film Critics' Week



Venice's 39th International Film Critics' Week section welcomes a selection with strong chiaroscuro

The Venice autonomous section offers a range of exclusive talents with seven debut features from across the world, as well as two opening and closing films and short films ▶

23/07/2024 | Venice 2024 | International Film Critics' Week



mk2 Films boasts two contenders for Cannes' Palme d'Or

The French sales agent's opulent line-up notably consists of ten titles in the various Cannes showcases, with works by Christophe Honoré and Jia Zhangke in competition ▶

13/05/2024 | Cannes 2024 | Marché du Film

related news

01/09/2024

Venice 2024 – Orizzonti Extra

Review: *The Mohican*

01/09/2024

Venice 2024 – Orizzonti Extra

Review: *Vittoria*

01/09/2024

Venice 2024 – Competition

Review: *The Brutalist*

01/09/2024

Venice 2024 – Orizzonti

Review: *Wishing on a Star*

31/08/2024

Venice 2024 – Competition

Review: *Battlefield*

31/08/2024

Venice 2024 – Orizzonti

Review: *My Everything*

[all news](#)

international title:	Peacock
original title:	Peacock
country:	Austria, Germany
sales agent:	mk2 films
year:	2024
directed by:	Bernhard Wenger
screenplay:	Bernhard Wenger
cast:	Albrecht Schuch , Julia Franz Richter , Anton Noori , Maria Hofstätter , Theresa Frostad Eggesbø , Branko Samarovski , Salka Weber , Tilo Nest

main awards/selection

Venice 2024 International Film Critics' Week

full film profile

[amomama.com](#)

[VISIT SITE](#)



[Privacy Policy](#)

Copyright Disclaimer

The images used on this website have been provided by journalists and are believed to be free of rights. However, if you are the owner of an image used on this website and believe that its use infringes on your copyright, please contact us

immediately. We will remove the image in question as soon as possible. We have made reasonable efforts to ensure that all images used on this website are used legally and in accordance with copyright laws.

