

LOGLINE

Living, learning, suffering for their passion: the 26 boys living at the sports academy in the Turkish province of Amasya will endure a lot to realize their wrestling dream. In *Young Wrestlers (Genç Pehlivanlar)* they face the usual challenges of adolescence in a male dominated environment and contradictory contemporary Turkey. The observational camera remains unobtrusive while still allowing us to experience their everyday life at close range – somewhere between camaraderie and competition.

SYNOPSIS

Muhammed Ceylan, Beytullah Onur, Harun Kılıç, Baran Kendirlioğlu, Ahmet Yücel and Ümit Yılmaz (all 12-years-old) used to live in the rural villages surrounding Amasya, a city in a mountainous narrow valley in North Central Anatolia. Now they will all live together, with 20 other youngsters between the ages of 10 and 18, in the Wrestling Training Centre.

Most of these boys come from poor families. They will start their new training period and educational year in September. Some will be away from their families for the first time. They will build themselves a new life and a new family; and their main goal will be to complete their education and wrestling training successfully.

The coaches and their fatherly school principal also have been trained in this very same academy. They will be the kids' main supporters, sometimes motivating and consoling them and sometimes criticizing and scolding them.

Young Wrestlers (Genç Pehlivanlar) focuses on the friendship, triumphs and struggles of six 12-year olds. Baran, who has lost his mother, is brought up by his grandfather and struggles with his weight. Harun is a serious contender for national championship, but is bulimic. Beytullah is a very ambitious and a serious contender to become (inter)national champion, but his health problems stand in the way. Ümit is the clown of the group, Ahmet the youngest champion in his age category. Muhammed is our main character and guide throughout the film. He is the social glue that holds this group of boys together. An average wrestler, Muhammed nevertheless trains with intense focus to catch up and to prove himself he can be the best. All of them want to be a champion. But besides success in wrestling, they also have to succeed in their educational lessons. Students, who cannot accomplish both, unfortunately will have to leave the boarding school and go back to their villages.

The rivalry and hardships of the children are unveiled in this richly textured film. Spiced with humour, pathos, frustration, resentment and love it explores the myths and realities of the (blood) brotherly relationship and bond.

Boys will be boys, even if they are slowly becoming men. *Young Wrestlers (Genç Pehlivanlar)* is the story of these boys who want to prove themselves, to their parents and their coaches. Fighting their own demons, both without and within.





INTERVIEW

With Mete Gümürhan in See Magazine #22

Dutch-Turkish producer Mete Gümürhan talks to Melanie Goodfellow about his directorial debut *Young Wrestlers* ahead of its Berlinale world premiere.

Turkey's national sport of oil wrestling, in which fighting competitors douse themselves in olive oil, has an increasing global following thanks to social media and the spread of the sport by Turkish

expats. Less well known are the children's tournaments that run alongside the main championships in June and which are taken every bit as seriously by the young contenders and their families.

Dutch-Turkish producer and filmmaker Mete Gümürhan's feature documentary *Young Wrestlers* explores the phenomenon in the province of Amasya in Northern Turkey. The feature documentary, supported by the Netherlands Film Fund and premiering in the Berlinale Generation

section, marks a directorial debut for Gümürhan who has spent the best part of a decade producing under the banner of his Amsterdam and Istanbul based Kaliber Film, which he founded in 2007.

The Rotterdam-born filmmaker, who studied film at the Willem de Kooning Academy Rotterdam and is also an alumnus of Berlinale Talents, IDFAcademy, CineMart's Rotterdam Lab and EAVE, now divides his time between the Netherlands and Turkey.

For *Young Wrestlers*, Gümürhan and his crew followed pupils at the Amasya Wrestling Centre, a boarding school where children train to be wrestling champions while getting an education too. The film focuses on half a dozen 12-year old boys including the motherless Baran, who struggles with his weight, Harun, a strong contender who is training hard to catch up after breaking his arm, and Ahmet who is in awe of his older brother, an Olympic wrestler.

Gümürhan says the idea of exploring

the world of child wrestling came to him while producing Dutch Willem Baptist's award-winning doc *I'm Never Afraid*, about a young motor-cross enthusiast. "It switched me on to the topic of children in sport," he explains, adding that he likes the honesty of children. "They don't have a mindset that they have to back up what they say or do... They don't have an ego yet."

Gümürhan is directing the work through

Kaliber Film with the support of his new partners at the company Aydin Dehzad and Bas Broertjes. The pair jointly produced Nima Mohaghegh's 2014 Student Academy Award-nominated *Sacred Defense* – set against the backdrop of the Iran-Iraq War – while studying production at the Netherlands Film Academy. The pair will be attending IFFR's Rotterdam Lab this year.

Other upcoming productions on the company's slate include Gümürhan's

debut fiction feature *MNK Boy* about a Dutch-Turkish 12-year-old getting used to life in Istanbul after moving there from Rotterdam when his father gets a job with a Dutch bank in Turkey. Production companies attached included Dutch Topkapi Films and Turkey's Filmalti. The film also won the support of the Turkish Cultural Ministry's cinema fund.

Gümürhan is also developing a second feature doc about child labourers on different continents. "I want to follow the

lives of several children who do heavy work but still find hope in their misery" he says.

The unique blend of diverse cultural backgrounds that makes up Kaliber Film creates a perfect bridge between East and West. This influences the kind the stories we find important. We want to shine a light on parts of the world that are not often shown in Dutch cinema. In this way we aspire to take on a guiding role within the Dutch film industry.



COMPANY PROFILES

Founded in 2007, KALIBER FILM is a creative and internationally oriented independent production company based in Amsterdam and Istanbul. Kaliber Film develops and produces author driven original narrative productions, making no distinction between fiction and documentary form or style.

In 2014 producers Aydin Dehzad and Bas Broertjes joined Kaliber Film. This gives Kaliber Film more possibilities to work with young Dutch filmtalent. In 2013, Aydin Dehzad en Bas Broertjes graduated successfully from the Dutch Film Academy, producing two fiction films (*Patrons* by Colin Huijser and *The Sacred Defense* by Nima Mohaghegh) and an award-winning commercial. *Sacred Defense* was nominated for a student Oscar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and won the Cilect Award for best student film of the world.

Kaliber Film has (co)produced several award-winning shorts and feature films, such as Asli Özge's *Men on the Bridge* (*Köprüdekiler*; premiere Locarno, Golden Tulip Best Film award of Istanbul Film Festival), *Lifelong* (*Hayatboyu*; premiere Berlinale, Golden Tulip Best Director & Director Photography award of Istanbul Film Festival and Golden Hugo nomination at Chicago International Film Festival), Adrian Sitaru's *The Cage* (*Colivia*; premiere Berlinale, Golden Bear nomination and DAAD Short Film award of Berlinale) and Willem Baptist's *I'm Never Afraid!* (*Ik Ben*

Echt Niet Bang!; premiere IDFA, Golden Gate award of San Francisco International Film Festival and Grand Jury Prize winner at Atlanta Film Festival). Most recently Kaliber Film produced *Young Wrestlers* (*Genç Pehlivanlar*) which will premier at the 66th Berlin International Film festival. Currently Kaliber Film is developing multiple (inter)national features.

FILMALTI founded in 2006 and based in Istanbul. Creatively works mainly on commercials and TV series.

Kaan Korkmaz born in 1972 in Istanbul, Turkey. After he completed his high school education in Istanbul, he moved to Ankara where he earned his bachelor's degree from University. His professional career began in 1998 with the film *Laleli'de Bir Azize*. In 2004 and 2006, he set up Işıksanat and 33 Kare, a lighting and camera rental company. Afterwards, to produce commercial viable films he established Filmalti, an independent film company.

Zeynep Aşkın Korkmaz born in 1976 in Istanbul, Turkey. After graduating with a degree in Economics from Koç University, her career in film began as a production assistant and worked for many films since then. In 2010 she produced her first feature film entitled *Çakal* from their outlet Filmalti. Most recently she (co) produced alongside with Kaliber Film the feature (documentary) film *Genç Pehlivanlar*.





BIOGRAPHY & FILMO- GRAPHY OF THE DIRECTOR



Mete Gümürhan (1975) was born in Rotterdam. He graduated in 2009 from Willem de Kooning Academy Rotterdam Audiovisual Design & Art department. While studying at Willem de Kooning Academy he co-founded Kaliber Film in 2007. In 2012 Mete established Kaliber Film in Istanbul. He is based in Rotterdam and Istanbul.

Genç Pehlivanlar/Young Wrestlers will mark his directorial debut. He is currently working on his fiction film-project MNK Boy, which has gained the support of

the Turkish Ministry of Culture. He is an alumnus of the Berlinale Talents, IDFAcademy, CineMart's Rotterdam Lab and EAVE.

DIRECTOR, FEATURE

ŞAHMERDAN BAŞI (MNK BOY) 2018, FICTION, 4K, COLOR, 90' MIN - IN DEVELOPMENT [Topkapi Films (NL) & Filmalti (TR)] selected for 17th Holland Film Meeting & 29th Cinekid 'Junior Co-production Market'

DIRECTOR, FEATURE

GENÇ PEHLİVANLAR (YOUNG WRESTLERS) 2016,

DOCUFICION, DCP, COLOR, 90' MIN, DOLBY SRD [Filmalti (TR)] selected for 28th Cinekid 'Junior Co-production Market', 17th Thessaloniki Documentary Festival 'Docs in Progress' & 52th International Antalya Film Festival 'Film Forum Work in Progress Platform'

WORLD PREMIERE: 66th Berlin International Film Festival **FESTIVALS&PRIZES:** Crystal Bear for Generation Kplus nomination

(CO) PRODUCER, FEATURE

HAYATBOYU (LIFELONG)

by **Aslı Özge** 2013,

FICTION, DCP, COLOR, 102' MIN, DOLBY SRD
[Bulut Film (TR), Razor Film (DE), Augustus
Film (NL), ZDF/Arte & Eurimages]
cinema release in Turkey, Germany,
Benelux, France

WORLD PREMIERE: 63rd Berlin International
Film Festival

(CO) PRODUCER, FEATURE

J.A.C.E by Menelaos Karamaghiolis 2011

FICTION, 35 MM, COLOR, 110' MIN, DOLBY DIGITAL
[Pausilypon Films Ltd, Pi Film Productions,
Filmes Fundo, Geyzer Ltd. & Eurimages]

WORLD PREMIERE: 24th Tokyo International
Film Festival

PRODUCER, SHORT

DONNIE by Willem Baptist 2011,

FICTION, 35 MM, COLOR, 12' MIN, DOLBY SR

WORLD PREMIERE: 40th Rotterdam Inter-
national Film Festival

PRODUCER, SHORT

**IK BEN ECHT NIET BANG! (I'M NEVER
AFRAID!) by Willem Baptist** 2010,

DOCUMENTARY, 35 MM, COLOR, 20' MIN, DOLBY SR
[VPRO] sold to ZDF/Arte & Korean TV

WORLD PREMIERE: 23rd International Docu-
mentary Film Festival Amsterdam

PRODUCER, SHORT

COLIVIA (THE CAGE)

by **Adrian Sitaru** 2010,

FICTION, 35 MM, COLOR, 17' MIN, DOLBY SR
[4 Proof Film (RO), producer Monica
Lazurean-Gorgan]

WORLD PREMIERE: 60th Berlin International
Film Festival

(CO) PRODUCER, FEATURE

KÖPRÜDEKİLER (MEN ON THE BRIDGE)
by **Aslı Özge** 2009,

FICTION, 35 MM, COLOR, 87' MIN, DOLBY SRD
[Endorphine Produktion (DE), Yeni
Sinemacılık (TR) & ZDF/3Sat, Bayerische
Rundfunk, YLE]

cinema release in Turkey, Germany,
Benelux, UK, Ireland, Romania, Austria,
Hungary **WORLD PREMIERE:** 62nd Locarno
International Film Festival





FACTSHEET

TITLE	GENÇ PEHLİVANLAR / YOUNG WRESTLERS
CAST	MUHAMMED CEYLAN, BEYTULLAH ONUR, BARAN KENDIRLIOĞLU, HARUN KILIÇ, AHMET YÜCEL AND ÜMIT YILMAZ
GENRE	DOCUMENTARY
LENGTH	90 MINUTES DCP, 2.39:1, 5.1
DIRECTOR	METE GÜMÜRHAN
PRODUCER	KALIBER FILM, AYDIN DEHZAD AND ASLI AKDAĞ
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER	FILMALTI, ZEYNEP AŞKIN KORKMAZ AND KAAN KORKMAZ
LINE PRODUCER	BAS BROERTJES AND UĞUR ŞAHİN
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY	ANDRÉ JÄGER
EDITOR	ALI AGA
CO-EDITOR	İNÉZ POORTINGA
SOUND DESIGNER	CENKER KÖKTEN
CO-SOUND DESIGNER	HUIBERT BOON
POST	RAAMW3RK
SUPPORTED BY	TURKISH CULTURE AND TOURISM MINISTRY'S GENERAL DIRECTORATE OF CINEMA NETHERLANDS FILM FUND AMASYA AND BALIKESİR/KARESI MUNICIPALITY 33 KARE AND IŞIK SANAT ZEPLIN SOUND
SELECTED FOR	JUNIOR CO-PRODUCTION MARKET [28 TH CINEKID] DOCS IN PROGRESS [17 TH THESSALONIKI DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL] ANTALYA FILM FORUM [52 TH INTERNATIONAL ANTALYA FILM FESTIVAL]
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