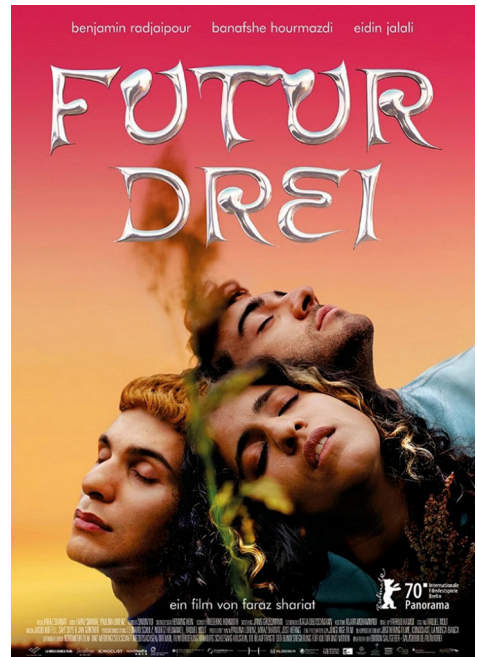


No Hard Feelings/FUTUR DREI (2020)

Simoné Goldschmidt-Lechner, Aidan Riebensahm, and Arpana Aischa Berndt
(for Jünglinge collective)

dir. Faraz Shariat; prod. Paulina Lorenz, Faraz Shariat; screenplay Faraz Shariat, Paulina Lorenz; photography Simon Vu; music Jakob Hüffell, SÄYE SKYE. DCP, color, 92 mins.
Jünglinge Film et al., distrib. Edition Salzgeber.

No Hard Feelings/FUTUR DREI is a German production by a grassroots young queer BIPoC film collective (Jünglinge) and the first feature film of Jünglinge and director Faraz Shariat. The collective is involved in a range of other productions, such as the latest season of the online youth series *DRUCK* (2021), which centers on queer Black and East Asian femme experience. The interaction and community-building (i.e. the communal) aspect of this work is integral to all of its projects, including the feature film *No Hard Feelings/FUTUR DREI*, which focuses on experiences of the Iranian diaspora in Germany. Community and communal practice are associated with a shared history of experiencing Otherness, that is a shared range of feelings and emotions when interacting with the dominant society, which can be summarized under the umbrella of »non-belonging.« »Non-belonging« in German-speaking societies can be associated with modes of behavior that are deemed too emotional, too (melo-) dramatic (a »cultural difference,« see Shoorman), and art produced by actors that are viewed as Others, as individuals who employ modes of behavior that do not belong, is not considered part of what is canonically viewed as art. To put it more clearly, there is no space for hybrid identities in German art practice. Therefore, the only way of carving out spaces is to uncover the labels assigned to the margins and to use them to one's advantage from a marginalized perspective. The film *No Hard Feelings/FUTUR DREI*, released in the year of one of the largest right-wing terrorist attacks in post-World War II Germany, employs a melodramatic mode of storytelling to this effect.



Courtesy of Edition Salzgeber

No Hard Feelings/FUTUR DREI is in part based on events that Shariat himself experienced growing up as a queer Person of Color in provincial German suburbia, attempting to shed light on non-normative identity formation processes outside of urban landscapes. The film has been lauded in the press as »an immigrant love song set to a gay nightclub dance-pop beat with a defiant chorus of ›We are the future‹« (Kiang). Indeed, an aesthetic based on music videos is part of its trademark. By the collective's own admission, the film is not interested in telling a straightforward narrative but rather aims at subjectifying its protagonists to the greatest possible degree, to perhaps show them as »willful subjects« (Ahmed) in a world aimed at silencing them. To this end, amplifying the characters' intentions and their emotions is a central theme of the film, thus allowing for a viewing experience that is affective and itself part of the community building process outlined above. There is a certain naïveté in this approach but also more than a modicum of hopefulness. As Kiang puts it, »[a]s ridiculous as it is for three twenty-nothings to believe they can somehow remake the world in their own hopeful image, it is also perhaps the best shot we've got.«

The film tells the story of the young queer second-generation Iranian-German Parvis (played by Benjamin Radjaipour) who, after having been caught shoplifting, is sentenced to communal service at the local refugee center. There, he encounters the siblings Amon (played by Eidin Jalali) and Banafshe (played by Banafshe Hourmazdi), whom he quickly befriends. Amon and Parvis begin a relationship without much of the gravitas usually associated with narratives centering on queer relationships between Middle Eastern men and with only little outside interference and resistance from Amon's friends at the refugee center. Towards the end of the movie, Banafshe is informed that she has not been granted asylum and therefore must return to Iran. The trio flees from the refugee center but in the end, Banafshe leaves Amon behind and returns to Iran on her own. While the film's narrative follows a simple structure, it is full of montages and cinematographic embellishments that emphasize the characters' inner worlds, albeit in a metaphoric way that aims to become part of a larger (meta-) discourse. These montages and music video-esque aesthetic choices that veer away from a hard, gritty reality and have magical under- and overtones (and metaphors, as in the theme of the Japanese magical girl anime *Sailor Moon*, which is recontextualized here as part of a post-migrant childhood and serves as Parvis' catalyst for exploring his femininity) can be viewed as sentimental, since they shift reality into fantastical settings of 90s nostalgia from a post-migrant point of view, drawing on children's cartoons and anime, images of food, soft, dream-like colors, and the grainy images of home videos. This cinematographic aesthetic practice is highly melodramatic in nature and perhaps best encapsulated in the montage of possibilities towards the end of the movie (filmed with a method that turns the images into a fragmented kaleidoscope), which shows the characters how they are and how they could have been. The film's melodramatic mode is furthermore engrained in every aspect: in its English title (*No Hard Feelings*), in its use of color, in its dialogue. Melodramatic practice is viewed as an asset, as a mode of generating empathy with its characters, and a way of creating visibility and subject positions for these characters. When Amon looks at Parvis and whispers »I see you,« this is a comment directed at audience members who themselves may not be part of mainstream society, who may themselves be othered and feel unseen—it is an invitation to become visible through the act of seeing. Nonetheless, the film displays an acute awareness that the majority of the prospective audience is not

part of this minority. Therefore, it is interspersed with scenes that provide additional exposition directed at mainstream society, for example, when Parvis talks with his sister about what it was like growing up as a second-generation migrant, or when Banafshe explains that the refugee experience is not part of the diaspora experience. In a long montage towards the end of the movie, *No Hard Feelings/FUTUR DREI* becomes self-conscious and self-reflexive, knows it is being watched, knows that the majority of its audience is looking in from the outside, and that this practice itself is a form of Othering. It reacts by letting its actors and extras stare directly into the camera, as a challenge directed at the audience: They see you.

As a further act of self-awareness and a self-critical approach, Jünglinge offers up a catalogue carrying the title of this transcendental line (Molt and Berndt), to revise some of the images being called the »future of German cinema« (Kay). The collected texts offer thoughts and perspectives dealing with the ambivalence of visibility (Schaffer) and highlighting the limitations of the film's story. For example, female and femme perspectives, Blackness and refugee issues are addressed only superficially, thereby unwittingly turning these marginalized positions within the BIPOC community into objects. Radically subjectifying as many marginalized positions as possible in German cinematographic landscapes in the future is one of the collective's most important goals.

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