

From Cannes to the Countryside: The Altmark Steps into the Spotlight

On 28 August, the film SOUND OF FALLING (german movie-title: IN DIE SONNE SCHAUEN) – awarded the Jury Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival – will be released in cinemas. Shot in Saxony-Anhalt's Altmark region, the production once again puts the state in the spotlight. The film's success is set to draw attention to the development of rural areas and highlight new opportunities.

Saxony-Anhalt intends to leverage the international recognition of SOUND OF FALLING at Cannes to present the Altmark – where director Mascha Schilinski filmed the story – as both an attractive travel destination and a desirable place to live. The recognition not only brings international visibility to the state but also shines a nationwide spotlight on the Altmark as a creative and emerging region.

The film's setting – a traditional village near Arendsee – is emblematic of the Altmark: rural, idyllic, and full of people ready to engage. "You could say: a whole village made this film," says director Mascha Schilinski. "Everyone opened their doors, brought out old tools, and even appeared as extras," the German director and screenwriter recalls of her experience filming in the region.

Filmed in summer 2023, SOUND OF FALLING tells the story of four women from different eras whose lives are mysteriously connected through a historic four-sided farmstead. Saxony-Anhalt's Minister of Culture, Rainer Robra, regards the film and its authentic setting – a farmstead typical of the Altmark – as "a powerful symbol of the cultural strength and potential of the region."

Saxony-Anhalt: A Growing Hub for Film Productions

Saxony-Anhalt has been steadily establishing itself as an attractive location for national and international film productions. A key driver of this development is the Mitteldeutsche Medienförderung (MDM), which supports film and media projects across Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia. In 2024 alone, MDM provided €19.4 million in funding for 174 projects, with €13.8 million invested in 51 cinema and television films. The FOKUS programme, initiated by MDM together with MDR, also strengthens young filmmaking talent in central Germany.

Looking ahead, Minister Robra emphasises "an even stronger need to generate valuable effects in Saxony-Anhalt" through the state's cultural and media funding. The Cannes Jury Prize is a clear example of how such effects can influence tourism and regional development in the Altmark both in the short and long term.

"We are already seeing growing interest from cinephiles who visit the region even before the film's cinema release," says Carla Reckling-Kurz, Managing Director of the Altmark Regional Marketing and Tourism Association. Media enquiries are already mounting at the production company: "They will culminate in a jointly organised press conference at the premiere in Salzwedel's Filmpalast cinema and later in press trips," she adds.

The right to use the Cannes Film Festival's emblem in marketing is also expected to extend visibility beyond the premiere date. In the long run, the aim is to position the Altmark with its landscapes, towns and cultural offerings not only as a cinematic setting but as a truly liveable region.

Creative Impulses from Rural Spaces

Inspiring people to rethink urban lifestyles and consider a move to the countryside is also part of the vision. As a pilot region for the project "CREATIVE PLACES IN THE COUNTRYSIDE", the Altmark showcases how rural Saxony-Anhalt offers impulses for living, working and entrepreneurship. Commissioned by Saxony-Anhalt's Ministry of Economic Affairs, Tourism, Agriculture and Forestry and implemented by the Investment and Marketing Corporation Saxony-Anhalt (IMG), the platform www.kreativorte-im-gruenen.de presents pioneering projects, initiatives and creative locations. Covering housing, construction, work, economy, lifestyle and tourism, it positions the Altmark as a digital frontrunner among rural regions.

Digital staging is also on the rise for Saxony-Anhalt's film locations. The *Set-Caching* app, which won Saxony-Anhalt's Tourism Award in 2023, uses Augmented Reality (AR) to bring film sets to life, allowing visitors to experience original shooting locations through interactive storytelling. Historical props even return virtually to their original sets.

Well-known locations already showcased through *Set-Caching* include the Arche Nebra (*Bibi & Tina: Bewitched*), Querfurt Castle (*The Physician*), Halle's market square (*Timm Thaler*), Allstedt Castle (*The Robber Hotzenplotz*) and Tangermünde (*Mit Herz und Holly*). With SOUND OF FALLING, another Altmark location may soon join this digital stage – a film that brings the region into the limelight and captures hearts worldwide.

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