

FOCUS

No.16  
2025

# Style

MICHAEL  
MACK



THE NEW  
DISNEY





5052  
No.18

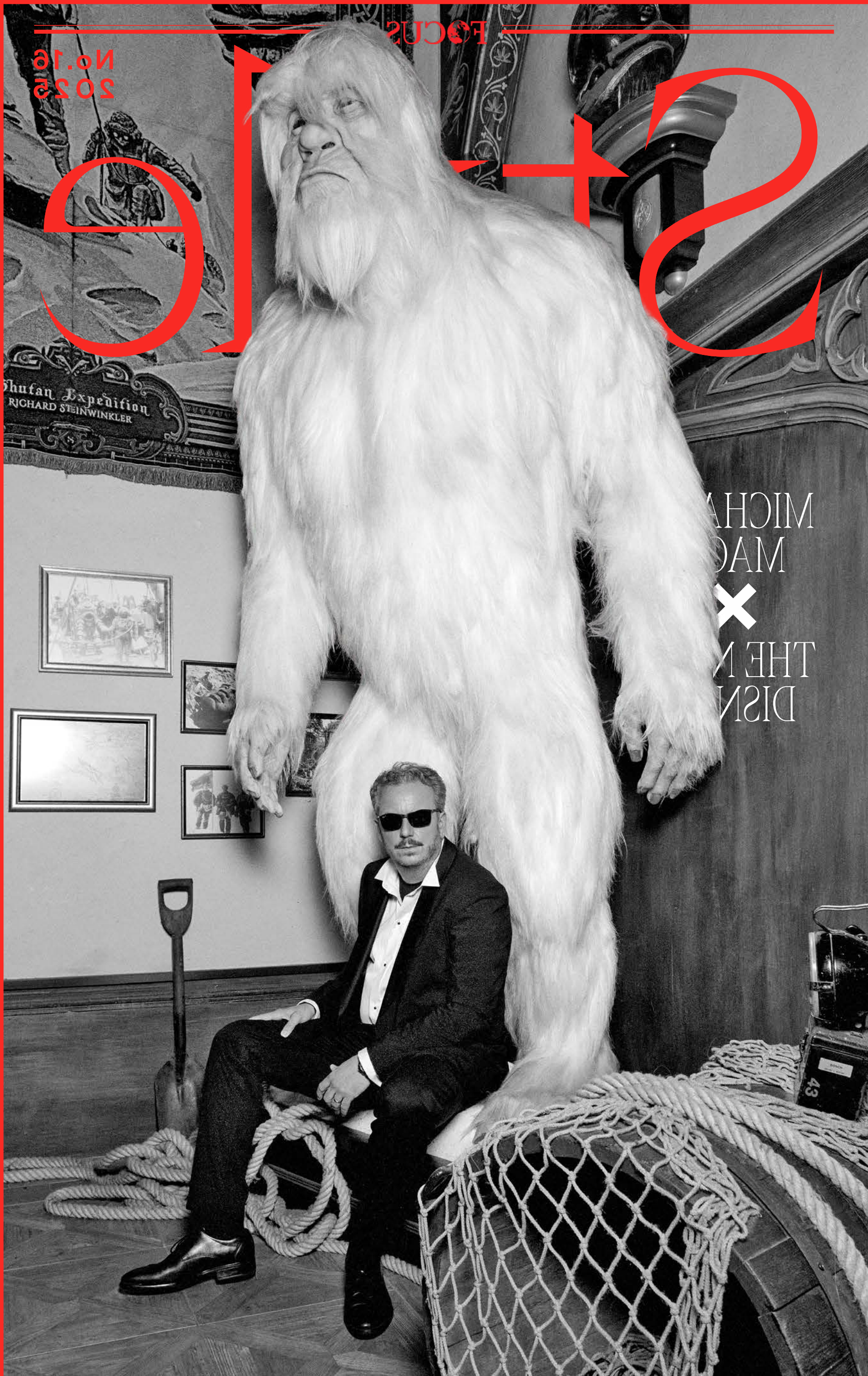
FOCUS

EL

ES

Shufan Expedition  
RICHARD STEINWINKLER

MAHIM  
DAM  
X  
THE N  
DISN

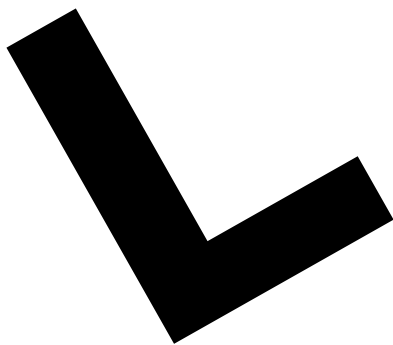




# IGNORE GRAVITY!



Jörg Harlan Rohleder  
Editor-in-Chief



Let me begin today with a comparison that's as fast-paced as it is risky. Rollercoasters are really just like sex: first, you wait forever; then everything happens super fast. And in the end, you want to start all over.

Rust, Baden, 10:19 a.m., a Tuesday in June. The sky is gray, the outlook gloomy. The monster reaching for us with its metallic arm is called Voltron. Before I can even think, I'm assigned a seat: right up front, far left. Oh boy! This hellish machine surely knows how to humble a bloke from Echterdingen. 100 km/h, seven inversions, and a evil loop lie ahead for Team FCS. 1,386 meters of pushing boundaries.

The pros say: if you scream, you lose. My seatmate says: if you scream, you live. My kids say: if you scream the loudest, you win.

It's our maiden ride on Voltron, the latest insane creation from Mack Rides, and winner of this year's coaster Oscars. Back in the day, we'd have called this „on-site research“ – now it's just midlife madness. We arrived as a group of six, but only four are brave enough to ride (Jelka and Frank chickened out – the nerves, oh Boy!). The devil's ride starts surprisingly smooth. We stop again. 3, 2... why does the track in front of us shoot straight up into the sky? 1... BOOOOOM.

That last cheeky remark dies in my throat. Instead: Arrrrrrggggghhhh! And: AAAAAAAAhhhhhhhh!

Fingers clutch the safety bar. 90 degrees becomes 180. The world flips upside down. Why do we do this to ourselves? Seriously. The ultimate thrill is called „No Hands.“ You have to let go at some point, surrender to gravity, become one with the machine. Or start praying.

Too late now. Speed x centrifugal force = adrenaline. Then: Zero Gravity. You can witness real bravery at war, in love, or on a rollercoaster. Voltron isn't a gimmick – it's the final frontier, the Boss of all Bosses. As you may have noticed: unlike in past issues, this issues cover story didn't take us to London, Paris, Los Angeles, or Ibiza. But to the edge of the Black Forest, into the magical kingdom of the Mack family.

Here, in the middle of nowhere, a clan of Baden visionaries – with balls out of steel and a sheer endless dose of imagination – created Germany's answer to Disneyland. Actually, Germany doesn't really cover it: It's the European version of a Disney Fantasy. Europa-Park is a beacon of what Europe is about: 17 countries

make up one world, where differences are celebrated and commonalities embraced.

Like all revolutionary ideas, one only needed three words: Rides, adrenalin, sausages. Young Roland Mack and his father Franz had just returned from California – full of ideas, full on Disney, fully enflamed by theme park fever.

The family had started four generations earlier with circus wagons and royal carriages. They became known for carousels and sleek rides. With a ride called „Wilde Maus“, the family made a grand promise: where it says Mack on the outside, there's adrenaline inside. But was that promise enough to build a family funfair in the middle of nowhere?

When things kicked off in the summer of 1973, Grandma Mack was at the ticket booth, five D-Mark was the asking price. Grandpa ran the rides, Jürgen managed the grill. Son Roland was everywhere – a true jack-of-all-trades, then and now. In fact: Europa-Park is his achievement, his legacy – and qualifies him easily for the Champions League of German visionaries: alongside Dietmar Hopp, Ferdinand Piëch, Dieter Schwarz, Hubert Burda and Uğur Şahin.

And yes, the guests they came. Over 150 million have visited Rust in the past 50 years – a true Bayreuth of adrenaline. With more than 100 attractions and a world-renowned rollercoaster and VR factory. With 5,800 beds in six hotels, a water park, a Michelin-starred restaurant, and one of France's oldest wineries as part of the family's portfolio. What was once a childhood fairy tale has become a powerful player in the global entertainment business. The first feature film is premiering right

in time for the big anniversary: when „Grand Prix of Europe“ launches in over 1,000 theaters across the U.S., even Disney will be watching closely to see how team Schwarzwald performs on its very own turf.

Rust, Baden, 3:21 p.m. The sky rumbles. The great set designer from above is showing the crew down in Baden what a proper thunderstorm looks like. Michael Mack pulls up – in a black EV-Smart.

The man taking Roland Mack's legacy into the 21st century and beyond greets you from our cover. The VR headset he wears isn't a homage to Daft Punk. At 46, he's designing the future of coasters, the future of adrenalin entertainment. Soon, guests will be able to craft their own AI-generated worlds at home, which they'll then experience on VR-enhanced rides in Rust. It's a mind bending world Mr. Mack is envisioning. As head of Mack Rides, he created Oscar-winning coasters Arthur and Voltron, produced the full length movie, and expanded the park into a media empire. He's what people from Swabia call a „Käpsele“ – a smart cookie. The New Disney thinks before he speaks. And he is driven by the same restlessness as his father. To this bunch, there's always a better, a different, a more detailed way to accomplish something. Ideas aren't born out of comfort – they are born from discomfort.

As always, this issue is about storytelling. But there's never been this much adrenaline before. So please buckle up – and place your sunglasses, coins, and mobile phones in the designated compartment in front of you. All liability at your own risk.

Enjoy the Ride, Team FCS

## The FC Style All-Stars



Roman Goebel

Technically, he's no longer available solo. That's why Mr. Goebel shot our cover story as part of Goebel & von Langen. Cooperative!



Jelka von Langen

This means the amazing Jelka wasn't available solo either. No problem – it would've been hard to choose anyway. Creative!



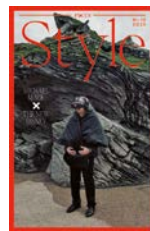
Toby Grimditch

He could've picked any number, but he chose 10 – and named his magazine after it. Meanwhile, he found time to style our fashion spread. Bold!



Rogier Bosschaart

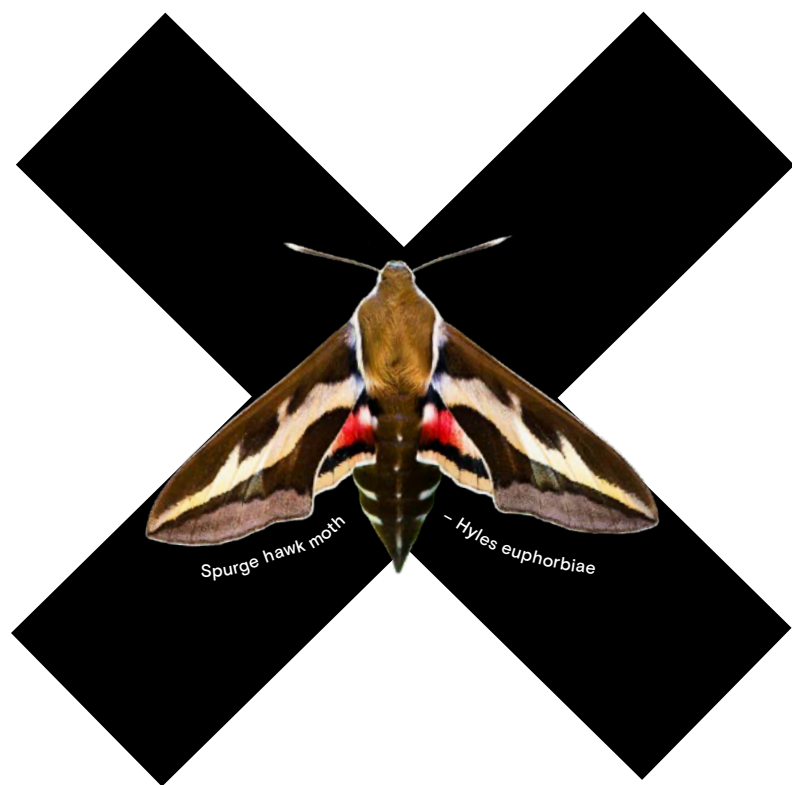
A first for our sacred pages: a model (Prada, Gucci, Dior) who's not only an artist but also insisted on bringing his art to the shoot. Cheeky!



Imprint

Reprinted on behalf of Europa-Park GmbH & Co Mack KG from FOCUS STYLE 03-25. Editors-in-chief: Jörg Harlan Rohleder, Franziska Reich and Georg Meck (both V.i.S.d.P.). First published in FOCUS No. 28/2025 by BurdaVerlag Publishing GmbH, Hubert-Burda-Platz 1, 77652 Offenburg. All rights remain with the publisher. Printed by: RMO Druck GmbH, Helene-Wessel-Bogen 14, 80939 Munich, Germany

# MICHAEL MACK



# THE NEW DISNEY

Photography: ROMAN GOEBEL & JELKA VON LANGEN

Fashion Director  
Art Direction  
Grooming  
Special Thanks

ALEXANDER GABRIEL  
FRANK SEIDLITZ  
RAMONA HEINTZ

MIRIAM MACK, DIANA REICHLE, MATTHIAS TUBAJ, JENS BUSSHART, JONAS HEMMERICH



Coat — MARTIN NIKLAS WIESER Trousers — BOSS Club — ADVENTURE CLUB OF EUROPE







Coat — DARTH VADER   Trousers — BOSS   Kingdom — VOLTRON



MICHAEL MACK



Stola — **BALENCIAGA** VR-Headset — **YULLBE**



MICHAEL MACK





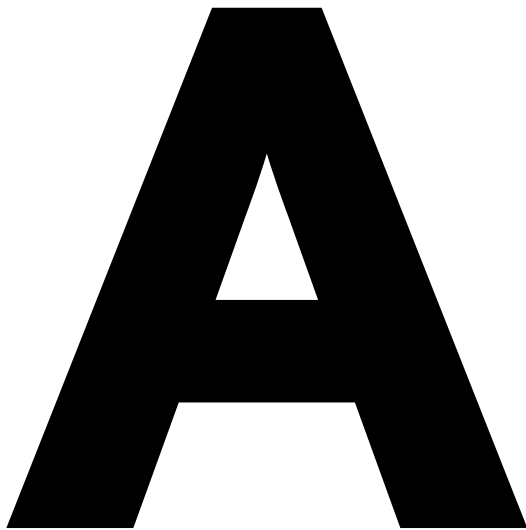


Coat — SF10G    Shirt — ETON    Trousers — BOSS    VR-Headset — YULLBE    Ride — WODAN



This is the story of a man defying gravity. It's a story of bravery and vision, a story of adrenaline and new frontiers. It takes place in a magical kingdom called Europa-Park – a Bayreuth of adrenaline in the middle of the Black Forrest, where more than 120 million people have found happiness in the past 50 years. This is the story **MR. MICHAEL MACK** – *a ninth generation Visionary-in-Chief for whom Walt Disney's shoes are just big enough. 3,2,1, BOOOM!*

INTERVIEW: JÖRG HARLAN ROHLER



**A for adrenaline** \_ Mr. Mack, riding a roller-coaster is a lot like sex: you wait forever, then it's over in a flash, and once it ends, you want to go again. I've never thought about it that way, but yes, you might be right! You've just won the rollercoaster equivalent of an Oscar for Voltron. What gave you a bigger adrenaline rush: the award or the first ride? The first loop! You're supposed to say that. No, going on stage really isn't my thing. I'm more comfortable developing things in the background. When Europa-Park first invited guests to the green meadows of Rust 50 years ago, there were just a handful of rides. How many attractions are there now across the 950,000 square meter park? More than 100. How many kilometers of track have been laid? 12. What's the top speed of your fastest coaster? 130 km/h. How many nails were used in the timberwood-coaster Wodan? Two million. How much steel went into the wild ride of Voltron? The supports alone weigh 500 tons. What's more intense: Voltron or going from 0 to 200 in a supersportscar built by your friend Mate Rimac? After his first ride on Voltron, Mate said, „Dude, this is way worse than my car.“ After riding in his car, I thought, „This is way worse.“ It's all a matter of what you're used to, I guess. Is there a rollercoaster that even makes your stomach turn? I can't manage more than three consecutive rides on Voltron anymore. It's embarrassing and my kids laugh at me for that. Where do you prefer to sit: up front or in the back? Front row. Loop or corkscrew? Loop. The current world record for continuous rollercoaster riding stands at 210 hours – what was your longest session? When Eurosat opened, my brother and I had a private challenge going. And? When Thomas rode it 46 times I had to admit defeat. Okay. Well, Thomas ended up with a nosebleed!

**B for Baden-Württemberg** \_ The best weather, the best wine, the best cuisine, a few excellent universities, breathtaking landscapes, and undoubtedly some of the greatest thinkers and engineers come from this Bundesland between here and the Swabian Alb: is Baden-Württemberg the German California? I think we're too conservative for California. But I can only recommend that everyone visits our region: Seriously, there's no place like it. For me, it's the most beautiful part

of the world. Europa-Park is the bold project of Baden visionaries. Can you pay with crypto in the park? Not yet, but it's a good idea. It must be our goal to always stay ahead of the curve. Especially considering that the Euro was introduced in the park long before Brussels managed it. Ha! It might sound boastful, but my allowance as a schoolboy was paid in Euros back in the 1980s.

**C for Covid** \_ Covid was probably the wildest rollercoaster of your life. Well, it was really hard for all of us. For the family, for the guests, for every employee. And especially for my father, who built all of this. This park is his life's work. Seeing him like that broke my heart. The family lost over 100 million Euros in revenue, electricity costs alone amounted to over 10,000 Euros per day. Do you remember the moment you realized: this virus from Wuhan is going to affect us too? I remember Merkel's address on TV, but the rest is a blur of hazy moments and memories. Some really horrible, but there are other sides to it as well though. What do you mean? When the world suddenly froze and life stood still, I had more time for new ideas, new projects, new technologies on my hand. I don't want to sound naive, but I did find some good in this exceptional state. That upended daily life during the period when everything was up for reevaluation. For example, we realized during Covid, how necessary it is to think about digital tickets and a virtual line. You were much faster with your app than the German federal government. That's more really that impressive, is it? How long did the rides stand still? Eight months in total. Were you still able to sleep? Deep deep down, I knew it would eventually pass. Do you generally sleep well? Yes, although I can feel how the weight of responsibility grows. With projects like the movie, Voltron, the whole AI game. Do you switch off your phone at night? Yes.



„Thomas and I were the first native amusement park inhabitants. It was great – but we didn't know anything else“

How many phones do you use? Two. Have you ever lost one on a ride? Rookie mistake.

**D for Disney** \_ The Mack family was successful in the carousel business for generations, but by the end of the 1960s, the market for mobile adrenaline attractions seemed saturated. The equipment was getting bigger, thus transportation got more expensive: in America, Walt Disney demonstrated what the next logical step would be if you believed in imagination, rides, and mice. In Germany, however, everyone thought the Macks were utterly crazy to attempt something so magnificent – here in the middle of nowhere of all places. In this no man's land, where nobody lived. People said: the eagles of death by bankruptcy are circling Rust. Another favorite was: the amusement park ruin is growing year by year. Those were the things my father often told me about when I was a boy. Once they're inside your magic kingdom, visitors can forget the outside world for a day. Exactly – that's what it's all about: escaping everyday life, creating illusions, telling stories. Supposedly, Walt Disney even forbid doctors from declaring anyone dead inside the park, should that sad case ever occur. Yes, this anecdote is legendary. Of course, we also try to shield visitors as much as possible in the event of a medical emergency or fire. But safety always comes first – even if it briefly disrupts the illusion. Your grandma was in the ticket booth, one grandpa was at the drafting table, the other one down by the boats, your uncle handled the sausage grill, and your father Roland was everywhere at the same time. What did the park smell like in your childhood? Oscar-winner Richard Taylor once told me, „Michael, you grew up in the chocolate factory.“ You literally grew up in the castle behind the fairy tale garden, right? Right. In that sense, Thomas and I are the first native amusement park inhabitants. It was great, sure, but we didn't know anything else. What was your favorite hiding place as a child? The fairy tale forest. And during school? I admit that the artist parties made a big impression on me. Not much happened in Rust, but you'd meet artists from all over the world – from Russia to Sweden to China. What did you learn? I remember vividly how the Turkish sword swallower taught me how to make a knife disappear down my throat. After three beer it actually worked! I thought that was pretty cool. Can you still do it today? God, no. The foolishness of youth probably saved me from much worse. I wouldn't push my luck.

**E for Europa-Park** \_ The trade magazine „Amusement Today“ has named the Europa-Park in Rust the world's best amusement park for the ninth time in a row. What do the Macks do better than the Disneys, Six Flags, and Tivolis of this world? The most important thing is our cultural rooting in Europe. That's our home, our origin, our promise. It dominates the entire storytelling of the park. Today, people may associate the history of amusement parks with Disney, but this story begins in Europe: the first amusement park was Bakken near Copenhagen. Then came Tivoli, Gröna Lund,



Liseberg, the Prater in Vienna. And let's not forget the funfairs that traveled from town to town. Rides and attractions are part of our cultural DNA – whether you call it a fair or a carnival. *The real core business of the family...* The Macks built circus wagons, carousels, simple rides. When my grandfather and father decided to open their own park in the style of Disneyland, they had the brilliant idea to embed the rides in themed worlds that were 100 percent architecturally authentic to Europe. And they still are. That turned simple rides into entire worlds. With their own stories, dreams, visions. That's the storytelling no other park can deliver. *And given the Mack family's obsession for details, it's a huge advantage that you're a family-run business rather than a publicly traded company like Disney.* Absolutely. With all its pros and cons (laughs). We also shouldn't underestimate our proximity to France and the culinary richness of Baden: enjoyment and culinary hosting has always been a key part of our promise. What Thomas has developed in that area is unmatched in our industry. He's playing in the Champions League, for sure. *This month marks a major milestone: 50 years of Europa-Park. How would you describe that in one sentence – or one word?* In-cred-ible! *50 years of adrenaline: which ride have you been on the most?* Probably Blue Fire. But nothing beats Eurosat. When it opened in the late nineties, Thomas and I were at the perfect rollercoaster age. *I once had the chance to accompany your father through the park, and I was struck by how detail-obsessed he was.* Hopefully, he didn't spot a broken lightbulb. That can make him really furious. *How many bulbs need to be serviced?* Well over a million! *How much was admission on the first day?* Five Deutschmarks. *How many guests showed up at the gates?* I'd really have to ask my father. I do know that there were 250,000 visitors in the first year. *And over 50 years, rumors say more than 150 million?* Correct. *The park lets you visit 17 European countries and see all the way from the Euro-Tower to the Vosges: is Europa-Park a kind of high-speed cultural understanding?* Exactly. And here you can feel, in a very beautiful way, that while the countries and people of Europe may be different in many ways, they only make sense together. *What can Europe learn from Europa-Park?* The same things a large corporation can learn from a family business: fast decision-making, solution-oriented thinking, minimal bureaucracy. Compared to a bureaucracy like Brussels, a family business has unbeatable agility. *As long as the family members trust and get along with each other. How do you relax?* In the evenings, when the park closes and the lights cast their magical glow, that's when I take the dogs for a walk and just feel happy. *Europe used to be a promise – now it often represents frustration. Can a man from the tri-border region understand that?* It's more important than ever to strengthen the European narrative. That's our cultural heritage. Appreciating differences, celebrating common ground. That's what it's all about. *How political should the park be?* A tough question. When Putin invaded Ukraine, we had long discussions. *And?* Russia is part of the European continent and its history. *So, you didn't shut down*

„We should never forget great European storytelling: There would be no Disney without the Gebrüder Grimm“

WM

Coat — EMPORIO ARMANI  
Sunglasses — SAINT LAURENT  
Shirt — STENSTRÖMS (LODENFREY.COM)



*the Russian sleigh ride?* Of course, it's tempting to react to major events. But that's simply not our position. *Still, you did remove the Gazprom barrels from Blue Fire...* That happened, yes. *Ultimately, it's all about storytelling: do you believe in the power of a European dream?* Absolutely. And we should all reconnect with that – Europe's great stories. Think of the Brothers Grimm: without them, Walt Disney would have had no stories to tell. We're still a land of poets, thinkers, and visionaries, even if that's sometimes forgotten. We need to remember that – our culture, our inventive spirit, our strengths. Europe's strengths. *You've been France's honorary consul for several years, and you and your father were recently named „great friends of France“, receiving the highest state honor available to non-French citizens.* We're very proud of that! *Did it help that you studied in three languages?* My French was terrible. That I got to become consul seemed rather impossible. *How is your French today?* Much better. Though the French don't always make it easy. *How did your special relationship with President Macron come along?* We first met in 2018 at a memorial service marking the end of World War I. *How many times has Monsieur Macron visited the park?* Not once! He still owes me that. *You're about to honor France again: rumor has it you're working on a Monaco section.* Thanks to my father! He gets along well with the prince and is an honorary member of the Monte Carlo Circus. *Wouldn't that be the perfect moment to open a casino at Europa-Park?* Good question. But gambling isn't really our thing. We remain a family park. *Sadly, Europe has a rather doubtful reputation among its own citizens.* What an incredible political failure – especially costly in times like ours, in times of existential crises and great change. But rough patches also hold great opportunities. If Europe pulls together now focusing on its strengths and holding its members closely together, something truly unique can be achieved. From a business point of view, one can only say: It's now or never. *Maybe we should think about re-locating Brussels to Rust – it seems like the heart of Europe beats at Europa-Park!* The fun factor is much higher here, that's for sure. Anyone questioning this will be sent straight to the haunted house. *And if that's not enough?* Then we have them ride the last row of Voltron. *For a minimum of ten times?* This will make the toughest politician cry.

**F for Film\_** *Just in time for the anniversary, you're sending the Euromice Ed and Edda to the big screen.* This has been a dream of mine for a long time. How successful it will be? We'll see at the end of the year. *Another step towards becoming an entertainment heavyweight.* Exactly. A feature film is the gold standard in the entertainment business. In the U.S., „The Grand Prix of Europe“ is premiering in over 1,000 theaters – which makes me really happy. That's extraordinary for a German film. It also increases the pressure though. It definitely does. *Especially because this is the first time, you are venturing into Disney's home turf.* The industry will be watching your box office numbers closely. Yes, very closely. *The production cost of your debut film is 20 million euros...* Which is a lot for

FOTO: dpa (S. 14)





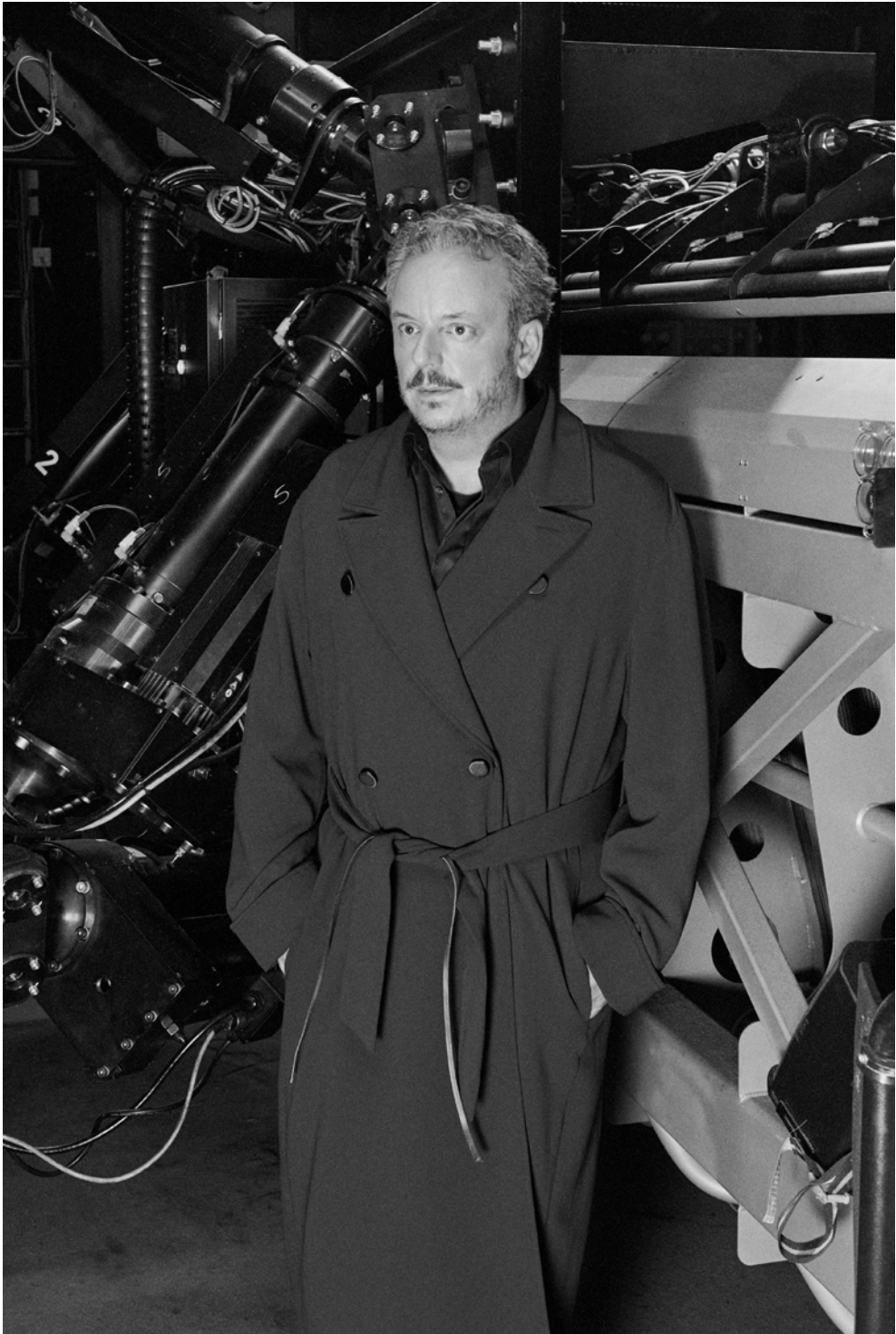
Coat — **MARTIN NIKLAS WIESER** Trousers — **BOSS**  
Ride (Loop) — **VOLTRON** Ride (Cylinder) — **MIR**





Armor — ADVENTURE CLUB OF EUROPE

Total Look — EMPORIO ARMANI    Hydraulics — VOLETARIUM







„AI is a digital tool that can simplify and accelerate your work like a Thermomix. However, real creativity, real storytelling and real emotions will always belong to us humans“

about not letting us eat too much fast food – she kept a close watch on that. And the front row was for guests only, no question asked. Plus: no staying too long at the artist parties in the evenings – those were the rules. *On a scale of 1 to 10, how happy was your childhood?* A solid 12. *What was your first job at the park?* Walking in the parade – or strolling around the park dressed as the Euromouse. *And?* Sounds like fun, but it was hard work. Back then, those massive mouse heads didn't have ventilation systems. *Who were your childhood heroes?* Superman. Batman. Kurt Cobain.

**K for KI\_** *As Future Minister in the Department of Adrenaline and Entertainment: What can AI do that Europa-Park can't?* Off the top of my head: nothing! *Are you worried that visitor numbers might drop because people will retreat into AI-created dream worlds via VR headsets in 5–10 years?* If we use the technology correctly, people might actually come to the park even more. *Why?* Because with AI and VR, it'll be possible to create completely personalized rides. You could design your own world at home, put on a VR headset at the park, and experience your own custom adrenaline trip. *Okay.* If you don't move with the times, you'll be left behind. The fairgrounds lost their audience because they didn't evolve. That's why I believe the trend toward personalization through digitalization will also arrive – and is already arriving – in theme parks. *Which intelligence do you prefer: artificial or human?* Human intelligence. *The history of human culture is the history of storytelling. Should we leave storytelling to machines?* Absolutely not! I'm a big fan of craftsmanship. AI is a digital tool that can simplify and accelerate your work like a Thermomix revolutionized the kitchen. However, real creativity, real storytelling and real emotion will always belong to us humans.

**L for Leadership\_** *You are the eighth generation to lead the company. What does leadership mean to you?* Speaking with employees on equal footing, being empathetic, allowing perspective shifts, saying thank you, recognizing performance, nurturing talent, staying curious. And also: leading from the front and taking responsibility. *What are the ingredients for an empire like yours today?* Work, work, work. *What are the advantages of a family business?* Fast decision-making. *Disadvantages?* There's no such thing as office hours. *What is luxurious to you?* Peace and nature.

Germany. By Disney standards it's practically low budget. *How many rollercoasters could you have built for that?* Delicate question – especially in regards to my father. *So?* He'll be reading this closely, so let's say... two. *Really?* Okay, three. *What do your kids think of the film?* We had a big family screening. The kids loved it. *When I saw the trailer yesterday, I thought it could be a great video game: „Mario Kart“ meets „Cruis'n USA“ in a Europa-Park remix!* Absolutely! For my long-term vision of the Mack entertainment brand, this film is a key element. We'll learn a lot. Not everything will work, but it's a foundation to build on. Let's not forget: even in our core business, we didn't start with Voltron – we started with a log flume ride. *And it would make sense for Snorri and Rulantica to make it to the big screen next.* There'll be a short film next year. Then we'll see... *What your father says?* That too (laughs). *G for Gastronomy – With six hotels and dozens of restaurants, Rust could also be called Gourmet Park Rust.* Thomas is doing a fantastic job. And I love his sense of experimentation: first came the Michelin-starred restaurant, then Eatrenalin... *Entrecôte meets rollercoaster...* It's not quite that fast-paced, but still a spectacular experience. *How big was your mother's influence on the park's gastronomy?* Huge. She focuses on regional products, preferably organic, ideally healthy. We always had our own pigs and chickens at home. It was always important to her that the children ate well. Thomas took that to heart. And when it came to fast food, she very clearly stood her ground against my father. *How much does personal enjoyment mean to you?* Just look at me! *Where do you most enjoy eating in the park?* At the „Seehaus“ – they make my beloved cordon bleu. *And in the hotels?* „Colosse“ or „Bell Rock.“ *Do you make more revenue from rides or rooms?* Still from the rides – but Thomas is catching up fast! *How many beds do you currently have?* 5,800. *What matters more to you: quality bedding or good water pressure in the shower?* Water pressure. *The family also runs one of the oldest wineries in France. You already offer your own rosé, but Thomas has even bigger plans. He wants to make the best Riesling in the world.* Big ambition – and I'm rooting for him. With Mathieu Kauffmann, he's got a top-notch winemaker, though it'll likely take a few harvests to get there. *Does the whole family help during the grape harvest?* Of course. There's no shortage of ambition. If you don't aim for the moon, you won't even reach the stars.

**H for Home\_** *How important is home to you?* Vital. *Do you prefer arriving or leaving?* Arriving. *What does home taste like?* Like cordon bleu.

**I for Investment\_** *Allegedly the family has invested over 900 million euros in the park since 1975. Is that true?* I don't think so. *More?* Yes. *A man who builds rollercoasters and turns adrenaline into a business model would seem risk-tolerant – or are you more Swabian and conservative when it comes to investments?* Definitely more conservative – though we're Badenians, not Swabians. But if we're truly convinced by a project, we'll put the conservative traits aside. *Who decides whether a major project like Rulantica, with over 200 million in investment, gets green lighted?* Ultimately, the family council. But since we see each other all the time and know each other's strengths, there are countless conversations beforehand. Trust is the most important currency – and our family has plenty of it.

**J for Jugend\_** *What values were important in the Mack family?* Loyalty, perseverance, hard work. My father always said: „Life is a marathon, not a sprint.“ *Were there any no-go's? No popcorn before dinner? Only five friends over at a time? Never sit in the front row? No Hide and Seek inside the haunted house?* Our mother was strict

**M for Mack One\_** *Mack One is your inhouse innovation hub. What are you currently tinkering with?* What excites you? Right now, our main objective is our first full-length movie. Otherwise, we're mainly thinking about new rides that could use AI to create movement patterns that weren't previously possible. Also, the idea of personalized coasters with VR, which I find incredibly exciting. We're also in the very early planning stages of a new adventure in France, but nothing is set yet. *When could we be able to design our own rollercoaster experiences?* 2026, maybe 2027. That's not far off. *And what's the plan in France?* We're working on expanding the life resort concept. *As in a second park?* No, more like a second experience resort. *Like Rulantica?* Don't be so nosy! *So hotels plus X?* Yes, hotels plus X. *Why France and not Wendland?* Cross-border projects are beacons of European identity. We need that. Europe needs more bridges – especially in politically difficult times. *Are you already building?* No. *Do you already have bought properties?* No. *Can you at least tell us where it will be?* No.

**N for New Disney\_** *Walt Disney turned his cartoons into a theme park. Now you're going the other way: bringing your 3D characters to the 2D movie screen. Are the Macks the new Disneys?* It's a nice thought, but after eight generations, we're not that new. That said, with VR visions and the feature film, the Mack offering is getting much broader. Maybe that doesn't make us the new Disneys, but perhaps the more complete ones. *Plus, Disney is a publicly traded company – thus the opposite of the Mack family business model.* Exactly. *Would becoming as big as Disney be a goal?* At Disney scale, we couldn't maintain the quality standards we demand. We want to grow in a way that creates identity, think European, and take responsibility here. *Which probably comforts your guests.* Why? *At Disneyland Anaheim, a family of four pays \$850 for the cheapest day tickets – and that doesn't include parking or pizza.* That's a steep price, indeed. Roughly twice what guests pay here. And the wait times are much longer at Disneyland. The average visitor there manages just 2.4 rides per day. *That's a joke, right?* I think they know they're pushing the pain threshold. But for many, a Disneyland visit is a once-in-a-lifetime thing. People put up with a lot for that. How did your kids like it? *We passed. \$850 was just too much for my Swabian soul. How many rides can you do in Rust in a day?* On average, nine. That makes us the park with the highest average. Honestly, we have too many rollercoasters... ..*and no dynamic pricing?* We don't want to rip people off one time – we want them to come back, again and again. *Do they?* 80 percent are returning guests. That shows we're doing something right!

**O for Originality\_** *Mr. Mack, do fake rollercoasters exist?* In China, there are at least two Arthur knock-offs that I know of. Sadly, we live in a world where everything gets copied. It's increasingly hard to protect creativity, ideas, and originality. *Have you ridden the fake Arthurs?* No, the pictures are enough. From what I see, I'd never allow those in my park. Never. *According to the Golden Ticket Awards – the amusement park Oscars – Rust has the best park in the world. How often do you get offers to open branches in Asia or America – or to sell the whole park?* There have always been inquiries. But if we do something abroad, it has to follow one rule: if it says Mack on it, the family has to be in it.

**P for Politics\_** *If politics were a rollercoaster, where would we be right now?* Coming out of the dip, just before the next climb. Full of hope that things are going up again. *Do you ever despair at politics?* Not despair – but I do worry. The question is how to get the country politically realigned so it's more forward-thinking again. Since Merz,



the mood has shifted, and that gives me hope. *A few years ago, you wanted to build a cable car over to France but were blocked due to environmental protection concerns. Isn't cultural exchange more important than environmental red tape?* I didn't understand the reactions. Probably a lot was mishandled beforehand, and things went wrong after the announcement. Technically, it was the most environmentally friendly means of transport: silent, powered only by hydroelectricity. We weren't even going to install supports in the nature reserve – it would have floated above. I never expected such intense pushback. Social media does have upsides, but the outrage and escalation it generates can really do damage. We definitely need to talk more with each other – not about each other.

**Q for Quintessential\_** *Wodan or Voltron?* Voltron. *Haunted house or swing carousel?* Haunted house. *Italy or France?* France. *Adrenaline or endorphins?* Endorphins. *Loop or corkscrew?* Loop. *Front or back car?* Depends on the ride. *Arrival or departure?* Arrival. *Floating or flying?* Floating. *Horizontal or vertical?* Horizontal. *Sweet or salty?* Salty. *Still or sparkling?* Still. *Tea or coffee?* Depends on the time of day. *Mickey Mouse or Euromaus?* Euromaus.

**R for Rulantica\_** *In November 2019, you opened Rulantica – the biggest water adventure in Europe. How many square meters, how many slides, how much water?* 54 attractions, 38 water slides, covering 63,000 square meters. *Water?* Plenty. *So not the whole of Lake Constance?* No! *What's your favorite slide?* Honestly, I prefer rollercoasters. So I'll say Wild River, a whitewater ride that flows outdoors. You can just drift and relax. *What's the name of that insane slide where you drop straight down out of a kind of phone booth?* I've blocked it out. *Really?* Way too intense for me. I just remember my cheeky son pressing the button early and me swallowing a ton of water. *The water park is the ideal way to keep guests longer in the Mack universe. Exactly. It also bridges the winter off-season when the park is closed. Do you have enough hotel beds?* Not on many days, which is why we're continuing to build. *Here on-site?* Yes. *What will the next hotel theme be?* That's for my sister to announce in due time. *My second R stands for Rides: your first built rollercoaster was Blue Fire. Yes. And there's a personal story attached, right?* I proposed to my wife on that ride. *Sounds like a thrill ride. Actually, it was the opposite: I stopped the ride with the block brake so she couldn't run away. Upside down?* No! With the block brake, not the head brake. *What if Miriam had said no?* She'd have had to climb down the ladder. *Was Blue Fire the first loop in 200 years of Mack family history?* Yes. *Why was your grandfather so against it?* I think he didn't trust his engineers enough. He came from a background of round rides – Swabian Railway, Alpenexpress,



Poncho — LORO PIANA  
Shirt — ETON  
Wagon — VOLTRON

„Crisis times are carousel times: 2024 was the best year ever for the Europa-Park Resort. A day at the park is like a mini vacation for our guests“

MM

Wild Mouse. When I got to the workshops in Waldkirch, we put a lot of work into the track. In the end, we designed it completely from scratch. *How did your grandfather take it?* He was skeptical – especially after the first test run, when the train got stuck exiting the loop. *Oof.* Yeah, that was rough. Especially since he happened to be driving past the site and just shook his head. *But after the launch, surely he loved the loop on Blue Fire?* He never rode it. *How many coasters does Mack Rides build each year?* Between four and eight. *How many of your rides are operating in parks worldwide?* Around 300. *Top seller still the Wild Mouse?* Yes, it's still our bestselling ride. *Have you felt the impact of Trump's tariff madness?* Thankfully, not yet. What we do feel, though, are the huge increases in steel and energy costs. That really squeezes margins. *Who are your clients?* All the major players: Disney, Six Flags, Universal. *Any orders yet for Voltron-style coasters?* Voltron's doing well. We just built a „Baby Voltron“ for a small park in Austria. *The first rollercoaster boom came in the Roaring Twenties. In the 1950s, people rode away from the trauma of war. Today, in the midst of multiple crises, demand must be through the roof. Business is booming. Crisis times are carousel times. A day at the park is like a mini vacation*

for our guests. 2024 was the best year ever for the Europa-Park Resort. *How many visitors?* Almost seven million. *Overnight stays?* Over one million. *Hotel occupancy?* Often 100%, and well over 90% on average. *Longest wait time?* Voltron once hit 90 minutes. But that was during super peak times. *Still shorter than the lines at Disney.* Haha!

**S for Storytelling\_** *What's more powerful: centrifugal force or storytelling?* Ideally both together. *What makes a good story?* It needs a conflict and a villain. And ideally, it should evoke a wide range of emotions. *What was your favorite book as a child?* „The Neverending Story.“ *Who are your storytelling heroes?* I always loved Ian Fleming. Then Tolkien – he didn't just create incredible worlds and stories, he even invented entire languages for his characters. And in modern times, J.K. Rowling is unmatched.

**T for Thea Award\_** *The Thea Award is the Oscar of the theme park industry. The first one was for „Arthur and the Invisibles“, the second for „Voltron Nevera“. Which was more important?* Each was important in its own time. *You worked with Luc Besson on Arthur, and with Mate Rimac on Voltron. What did you learn from them?* From Luc, mainly storytelling – his visionary power is incredible. From Mate, the unshakable belief that the impossible can become possible.

**U for Unwinding\_** *Others dream of vacation in Rust – where do you dream of getting away*





Jacket — PINEAPPLE FACTORY GALLERY Shirt — ETON Race car — ED & EDDA



to? Into nature. I love the South – Italy and Croatia especially. But also the Swiss Alps from time to time. *How many days off do you get each year?* My father would say: „Every day – because we get to work where others go on vacation.“ *Are you a strict boss?* I’m a demanding boss. *That doesn’t make things easier.* No, it doesn’t.

**V for Virtual Reality\_** *With VR Coaster, you’re working on digitally expanding the rollercoaster into virtual worlds.* I’m fascinated by the almost limitless possibilities. Plus, digital projects are nearly infinitely scalable – something we can’t do with Europa-Park. You can’t just clone this with a mouse click; too much concrete and steel. But what excites me most is the customizability of digital experiences. That opens a completely new dimension for rollercoasters. *You also award the Aurea Award – your VR and AI industry meetup is Europe’s most important future prize in the digital adrenaline business.* Correct. *It honors projects in Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Mixed Reality, and Extended Reality. Which reality does Michael Mack prefer?* In that group, Mixed Reality. But generally, I feel most at home in actual reality. *What’s the difference between Mixed and Extended Reality?* To non-techies, they all seem pretty similar. My wish is to one day add a second layer over the park – a world within the world, with an additional narrative and experience level. That could start with a smartphone and, of course, a VR headset. *Isn’t that already happening?* To my taste, the hardware isn’t quite there yet. It should be more integrated, immersive, and accessible. No one has really cracked that nut – not even Apple. *What’s missing?* I like the build quality and the operating system. What I don’t love is that the glasses film the real world with cameras. I prefer to see real life with my own eyes – and then have the digital layer projected on top. *Honestly, the Apple headset mostly scared me. Years ago, the idea of friends sitting in silence at a restaurant, all staring at their iPhones, was unthinkable. Now it’s the norm. Soon we’ll all wear glasses and experience life as a digital shadow play.* A sad trend, yes. We’re becoming more and more like cyborgs. *But in the end, thrills and fun are biochemical reactions in the body. Do you need real G-forces to feel real thrills?* In our business, G-forces are crucial. It’s about physical chemical reactions – releasing happy hormones, even fear. You can’t replicate that digitally. So, the real-world endorphin rush remains our unique selling point. *Electric cars need a sound – do virtual coasters too?* Absolutely. In the metaverse, Europa-Park needs a different kind of storytelling.

**W for Wilde Maus\_** *The first Mice were made of wood – now they’re made of steel. How many Wild Mice has the Mack family built?* More than 30. *How many rounds can your stomach still handle?* Fewer and fewer!

„My dream is to add an extra layer over the park – a world on top of the world, with an additional narrative and new levels of experience“

M

Jacket — PINEAPPLE FACTORY  
GALLERY Trousers — BOSS  
Loop — VOLTRON



**X for X-Files\_** *Tell us a secret: I read that in 1886 your ancestor Heinrich Mack I vanished without a trace. Where did he run off to?* We think he went to France. *That’s where the trail ends?* At least, that’s where his carriage was found. He was probably murdered. *Any secrets from Europa-Park?* Try your luck. *How do you avoid long lines?* Best to approach things in reverse: walk straight to Iceland and work your way backwards from there.

**Y for Yullbe\_** *Confession: during the Yullbe VR walkthrough, I started feeling queasy. Might’ve been the wine the night before, but I was a bit shaky after 45 minutes of virtual adventure.* Totally understandable. You need to get used to the tech. And less wine the night before wouldn’t hurt. *Theoretically, you can beam any imaginable adventure into the headset?* There are hardly any limits. *Wouldn’t that be something for more mature content – like Fortnite meets Yullbe?* Anything’s possible. But we’re a family business offering family entertainment. Still, Yullbe is a great way to learn and experiment with a transitional technology. Once Extended Reality devices become mainstream, we want to be at the forefront. That’s what Yullbe is preparing us for.

**Z for Zirkus Macksimus\_** *Your grandfather built circus wagons, your father the park, and you’re now the official family visionary. Which role do you like most: park director, coaster builder, entrepreneur, host, storyteller, father, son, networker, or forward thinker?* First, all the Macks were visionaries. So I won’t claim that title for myself. I’m just lucky enough to lead the company in the eighth generation and keep expanding it across borders. That makes me proud. It’s the combination of parts that makes us successful: Thomas’s food, the hotels, architecture, the winery, the coasters, the film, the VR experiences – only together do they form a compelling story. *In the hotel, there’s a saying: „Joy to those who arrive. Peace to those who stay. Blessings to those who go.“ Isn’t being park director overwhelming at times?* It can be intense – but that’s the nature of a rollercoaster. *How do you stay grounded when things move too fast?* Even more than in the past, I recommend retreating into nature. *Eyes open or closed?* Open first, then closed. *In July, Rust will host big celebrations: 50 years of the park, the film release, another rollercoaster Oscar.* If you work hard, you should party hard. *How long will the party last?* Two or three nights – and we’ll make the most of them. *Wine, champagne, or beer?* White wine spritzer. *On a scale of 1 to 10, how bad will the hangover be?* Not too bad on the first night – we’ll be busy welcoming guests. But on the movie premiere night? That’ll be a 10. *Which coaster should you avoid with a hangover?* Anything but Voltron – I’m a Europa-Park native, after all.



EUROPA-PARK PRESENTS

THE FIRST  
FEATURE FILM  
WITH ED  
& EDDA

ED & EDDA

# GRAND PRIX OF EUROPE

SUMMER 2025 IN CINEMAS EVERYWHERE

MACK Magic

BRUNNEN  
FILMPRODUKTION  
GMBH

WARNER BROS.  
PICTURES

© 2025 MACK Magic / Warner Bros. Entertainment Group

## We are the Emotioneers of tomorrow.

With deep passion, creative excellence and  
innovative engineering we build the future of thrills.

We are MACK One.



Discover more.  
Scan the QR code.

★ MACK One  
Emotioneers of Tomorrow