

Winner  
Audience Award  
Zurich Film Festival

# SAMI und JOE und ICH

*anja*  
**GADA**

*jana*  
**SEKULOVSKA**

*rebea*  
**LÜTHI**

ein Film von  
**KARIN HEBERLEIN**

BUCH & REGIE **KARIN HEBERLEIN** KAMERA **GABRIEL LOBOS** TON **IVO SCHLÄPFER** DANIEL HOBI GUIDO KELLER SCHNITT **MARION TUOR**  
MUSIK **DOMINIQUE DREIER & KILIAN SPINLER** SZENENBILD **MARLEN GRASSINGER** KOSTÜM **REGINA GYR** MASKE **SABINE FLÜCKIGER** LICHTGESTALTUNG **GREG AMGWERD**  
EINE PRODUKTION VON **ABRAKADABRA FILMS** IN KOPPRODUKTION MIT **SRF SCHWEIZER RADIO UND FERNSEHEN** MIT DER UNTERSTÜTZUNG VON **BUNDESAMT FÜR KULTUR (BAK)**  
**ZÜRCHER FILMSTIFTUNG SUISSIMAGE MIGROS-KULTURPROZENT** PRODUZENTIN **CLAUDIA WICK**

**ABRAKADABRA**  
film

**ZÜRCHER**  
FILMSTIFTUNG

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
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Focus Competition  
Zurich Film Festival

# Presskit

ABRAKADABRA Films & Outside the Box  
present

SAMI  
JOE  
und  
ICH

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# Synopsis

## **short**

Sami, Joe and Leyla are ready. Ready for a truly epic summer after finishing school and ready to get out and grab their slice of life. But what is to come, is diametrically opposed to their expectations and of a different magnitude than they anticipated. Determined to stand up for themselves, the three friends find out how right Leyla's mom was when she told them: always keep more dreams in your soul than reality can destroy.

# long

Sami, Joe and Leyla are an inseparable group of friends. Chatting and laughing, they roam through the suburbs of Zurich. The end of their time at school together should have been the start of an exciting summer, but the three youngsters have their hands full: Sami suffers under her overly strict parents, Joe has to look after her siblings, while her single mother works overtime and Leyla nervously begins her apprenticeship in a canteen kitchen. For the teenage girls tough decisions overshadow their dreams. In those defining days of their lives, their friendship seems to be the only constant. But as events take a harsh turn, even their friendship is put to the test.

# Notes from the producer

Sami, Joe and I grew out of the urgent need to show an alternative to the predominant women role models in film and media. Karin Heberlein's screenplay depicts honesty and normality, far from the all-present glittering social media self-portrayals.

To show neither university elite, 'Germany's next Topmodels', nor rich kids, but the pure opposite.

To set the story around average girls in an unspectacular corner of a Swiss city, and to reflect and play out universal conflicts and existing challenges that arise in everyday life in a multicultural society.

We all know through our very own experience how important the teenage years are.

How fragile you feel, how curious, how open and ready to absorb everything. How at this age you can go within seconds from being over the moon to down in the dumps.

What blissful bubbling life joy the promise of an apprenticeship, the very first trip without parents or the first kiss brings. And how much uncertainty and questioning is associated with this stage of life. The irrepressible longing for one's own identity, the urge to break away from family sometimes take disastrous turns. One thinks of radicalisation through the IS as happened in Winterthur a few years ago, as well as right-wing radicalisation and grooming. Especially with girls, this luring often takes place in the "safe" home, in their own room, through the virtual world. Concrete events and conversations with a youth psychologist contributed to Karins' shaping of the screenplay. It is in the nature of evolution, that we hope for our offspring and next generations that things will change for the better, that grievances will improve. We dream and trust deeply, that these girls and women will become more fearless, self-determined and non-conformist than us. That they won't hesitate to stand up for themselves and raise their voices in cases of injustice, injury and abuse.

But in the end what remains for us all, no matter how old or experienced, is: How do we respond to - how do we deal with - heavy, painful, traumatic experiences? How do we heal and grow out of them? May we gain strength and be able to move on stronger with these scars.

To make a film woven with significant themes and reminders of the exuberant and untamable energy and joy for life that we felt as young adults - that is what inspired me most.

Claudia Wick, January 2021



# Interview with director Karin Heberlein

## **Where did the idea for the story about three inseparable friends come from?**

One visual starting point for the story was an illustration of the “Rütli Oath” I stumbled on by chance. It depicts three beardy old men who swore in 1291 to support each other and, as legend has it, founded Switzerland. I knew that image from school, but it had never aroused my curiosity - mainly because it seemed too far away from the reality of my own life. This time I started to see beyond the picture to what it represented and realised that, actually, it shows a subversive moment: a secret oath full of power that stands for friendship and solidarity against odds. Memories of similar moments with friends started to emerge, and I began to playfully exchange the three Swiss Confederates heads with friends. This is how the image of the three girlfriends at their hangout came about.

The emotional core of the story lies in my cinematic work with young people over the past few years. These encounters have had a strong impact on me, touched me deeply and sparked my desire to create a film that reflects the reality of these young women - their difficulties but also their dreams. Friendship and solidarity was also my lifeline at that age, and seeing the same strong bond amongst those girls, encouraged me to focus on this.

It also preoccupied me, that the selection, when looking for films which speak from the perspective of, and not about young women, is still very limited. I wanted to make a film that would give an honest voice to the experiences that had been entrusted to me and tell a story from this angle.

## **You originally trained as an actress in England - How did that come about?**

Culturally, England has always been close to me. I enjoyed black humour, listening to British music, watching British films and reading English authors. Later I discovered theatre companies based in England, which were creating new and exciting work. They developed original material with an international



diverse group of artists, creating multilingual groundbreaking theatre – both emotionally and visually which touched me in a completely new way. It was work I could identify with, and I realised that I wanted to work in a similar way. So I auditioned for drama school in London, was lucky to get accepted, and moved there.

### **When did you realise you wanted to direct?**

I had always wanted to tell stories; creating was the priority, performing the pleasure. As an actress I looked, whenever possible, for productions that were developed by an ensemble. So the transition to directing came about organically. I began to develop and direct my first plays, and further training in film directing led to short films and eventually a scholarship at the Drehbuchwerkstatt in Munich.

### **Where did you find the three main actresses and how did you prepare the shoot on set with them?**

The age of the three protagonists determined the working process. I had a very clear idea of which character traits each of the three girls had to portray, so I embarked on a long search – at schools, youth centres and sport clubs. In the end I found Sami enjoying an ice cream with friends, Leyla in football training and Joe at a youth theatre performance.

While I was pretty sure that each one of them would confidently grow into their roles, the big question remained how the three would fit together, as an inseparable group of intimate childhood friends.

This became the focus of the work we did together, once a week for almost a year. My only requirement for the sessions was openness and unsparing honesty from all of us; it was my guideline to authenticity. Without the script, we built the characters and their friendship step by step. And based on these rehearsals I continually adjusted the script and my expectations and fine-tune the characters.

The adult actors were also involved early on. It was very important to me to be precise within the family constellations. For example to construct the mixing of languages within the families accurately. I also live in a multilingual, multicultural family, and I know that the seemingly small decisions about

who uses which language when, are full of subtext. One chooses a language to convey something emotionally, to reach a person on a more direct level, to protest or to set oneself apart.

The cast worked over quite a long period, like a theatre ensemble. We improvised and ate together, so by the time shooting began, they were a family, a tightly knit community. This bond was crucial in creating a visible, credible and also physically perceptible familiarity with each other. It also gave the three protagonists courage to jump into situations and let loose.

### **Did the girls have reservations about certain scenes?**

I don't think so. From the beginning we talked about everything very openly. They trusted each other and me, and knew that there was room to question, doubt and fail. I felt a huge responsibility towards them - a responsibility one doesn't carry when working with professional actors - as they learned to separate themselves from their characters. Certain scenes, such as the scene with Joe and her boss, we prepared especially carefully. On set we had minimal crew and the actors were fully prepared and knew exactly how we would translate the scene. That gave them the security to concentrate on the details.

During shooting I also tried to come up with surprises and small changes for the three protagonists that would trigger new reactions. For example Sami's WhatsApp video message from Bosnia: Joe and Leyla saw it for the first time when the camera was rolling.

### **How did you discover the shooting location?**

While writing, I was visiting various youth clubs around Zurich and I already knew the area quite well. I had liked this particular neighbourhood, both visually and because of its location on the outskirts of the city, squeezed in between the forest and the train tracks. The housing estate has a particular character and yet it is recognisably Swiss in its cultivated surroundings. Luck allowed the sports field and the school to fit in perfectly, close to one another. This helped us to visually translate the tight cosmos that defines their world; only their respective work places are an escape, representing an outing into the adult world.



Marlen Grassinger's set design wonderfully built on the real conditions and heightened its characteristics so that reality and fiction blurred - for example the hangout we'd set up was taken over by young people from the estate. They didn't realise it being a set, they were just happy to finally have the perfect place to hang out...

The neighbourhood turned into our home during the summer. We were warmly welcomed and the kids living there started to mingle with the crew, coming to get ice cream from Catering, etc. It felt like we became a part of life there.

### **How was the working process?**

Right from the start, the aim was to tell the story consistently from the perspective of the three teenagers. This gaze from the inside outward, guided all our decisions regarding content, form and working process. Flexibility was key for the crew in order to give the three protagonists on set as much freedom as possible. We involved them in much of the decision-making - as with the inspirational costume design by Regina Gyr, which resulted in costumes that seem realistic while conceptually complementing the set perfectly.

With the DOP, Gabriel Lobos, we discussed different visual approaches. We tested mobile recordings, considered translating the visual language in "youthful» ways, mixing formats, using fast editing etc. The rehearsal process however, led us down a different - and to us surprising - path. We realised that a calm and breathing camera, which is unobtrusive in framing and keeps the perspective at eye level, would serve the story more honestly than an energetic, fast and loud approach: The fewer effects the visual language provides, the more the audience focuses on the three protagonists. There is no place for them to hide and this creates an unobtrusive intimacy and allows for concentration on details, central to this story. The choice of format, 4:3, further supports and reflects the perspective of young people: no broad perspective, no Cinemascope - you are entirely focussed on life within your own known life frame.

Our inspiration was a poetic realism that looks for beauty in unspectacular moments, in the everyday.

## **How was the soundtrack created and what was especially important to you?**

It was already clear to me during the story's development, that music would play a central role in its telling. Most teenagers define themselves through music. It expresses emotionally what is often not yet clear to them. I went looking for fitting musical partners at an early stage. Dominique and Kilian are versatile composers; they do the balancing act between live shows with their electro band Klichée and producing scores for commercials. They also know the young Swiss music scene very well. This was important to me, as I wanted the music to reflect the diversity and setting of the story. In initial discussions, we quickly realised that we wanted to create a soundtrack using music on two levels: first to depict the summer feeling and the fragile sense of being on the edge, and then to use music as a very subjective expression of each of the teenage girls' attitudes. In collaboration with musicians Naomi Lareine, Ikan Hyu, Caroline Alves and Danitsa, Dominique and Kilian created the film's soundtrack.



## **Biography**

# **Karin Heberlein**

Karin Heberlein trained as an actress at Central School of Speech & Drama in London. She worked for various theatres in the UK, co-wrote and performed with a number of ensembles, and toured festivals across the globe. Her focus shifted to film after attending the Master Class programme at the NFTS/Met Film School. In 2013 she received a scholarship for Drehbuchwerkstatt Munich at the HFF. Since then she has worked as a writer and director. SAMI, JOE AND I is her first feature film.

## Shortfilm

**I AM TED** - 2020 - 20 min

Co-director, documentary for children about the artist Ted Scapa funded by the film foundation Zurich - in postproduction

**THE BARREL** - 2017 - 9 min

Co-director, Documentation about the art project The Barrel by Japanese artist Tadashi Kawamata

**LINARD, MONTI UND DIE MUSIK** - 2015 - 25 min

co-director, music film for children

produced by Claudia Wick, Abrakadabra Films

funded by the Swiss Federal office of culture, the film foundation Zurich und SRF, Swiss National Television

**SPRING** - 2012 - 26 min

co-director, documentary about Royston Maldoom in Zurich produced by Pixibar Films

**LINUS TRIFFT MARIUS UND DIE JAGDKAPELLE** - 2011

26 min. co-director, music film for children

produced by Pixibar Films

**A LITTLE WHILE** - 2011 - 15 min

director, co-written by Drew Pautz various festivals in the UK

## Screensplay in development 2020 (selection)

**TATORT ZÜRICH**, Episodes 5,6 Crime Series

Co-writer: Claudia Puetz - SRF, Swiss National Television

**DRAUSSEN ANDERS** - Feature

Co-writers: Angela Gilges, Christopher. v. Delhaes

**MISSION A** - Series for young adults

Co-writer: Angela Gilges

Produced by: Tag/Traum Filmproduktionen Köln

**AUSTOLERIERT** - Feature, Comedy

Co-writers: Angela Gilges, Christopher. v. Delhaes Produced by: Starhaus Filmproduktionen Munich

## Other work

Concept and direction for various commissioned films  
Various film and theatre projects since 2008 (direction, writing) with young people in England and Zurich.

Radio play / audio guide with children selected for the International Art Biennale Manifesta 11, in Zurich 2016

## Selected / award

Berlinale Talent Campus

Total theatre award Edinburgh Theater Festival

Award for young directing talents Kampnagel Hamburg  
Associate Artist BAC London







# CAST

## **ANJA GADA - Sami**

One spring day, when Anja was enjoying an ice cream at a youth centre, she was asked by the director if she wanted to participate in a casting. With the ice cream still in her hand, she introduced herself and realised for the first time, how exciting it can be to impersonate another person. After graduating from high school in the summer of 2019 she filmed SAMI, JOE AND I and then embraced on a gap year as a climate activist. An internship at the young Literature Lab (JULL) and a stint as a waitress at a coffee shop, followed. At the moment she is working as a campaign intern for the socialist party of Zurich.

## **JANA SEKULOVSKA - Leyla**

Jana ended up with this unique opportunity while playing football. Karin Heberlein was looking for girls at the football club she played for, at the time. The whole process was a discovery which Jana enjoyed very much. It was a very special time and she firmly believes that she has found her calling. The project took a lot of time and energy but the end result is definitely worth all the sweat. Jana's motivation to finish school and to finish her apprenticeship has increased massively, as it brings her closer to her goal. Acting had been a distant dream since childhood, now it has become a real and tangible goal.

## **RABEA LÜTHI - Joe**

Already in secondary school Rabea noticed her passion for performing on stage. At some point the theatre company at school was not enough for her, so she looked for something to do with the rest of her free time and found «Junges Theater Basel», the youth theatre in her home town. She participated in several courses and was then invited to play in professional productions of the theatre. Among others, these were „ Noise» (2015) and «What we are looking for» (2018). Currently she is also involved in another production; „ Untitled» (2020) by Henrike Henrike Iglesias. Karin discovered her while performing «What we are looking for» and Rabea was subsequently cast in SAMI, JOE AND I. She just started her first year at drama school, at the Filmakademie in Ludwigsburg.



# Team

## ABRAKADABRA Films

### IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH

SRF Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen  
Redaktion (SRF) - Tamara Mattle  
Herstellungsleitung (SRF) - Baptiste Planche  
Leitung Fiktion (SRF) - Urs Fitze

### WITH THE SUPPORT OF

Zürcher Filmstiftung  
Bundesamt für Kultur (BAK)  
suissimage  
MIGROS-Kulturprozent

### Cast

Sami Sušić  
Joe Alvarez  
Leyla Divjak

Anja Gada  
Rabea Lüthi  
Jana Sekulovska

Malenka Sušić  
Adem Sušić  
Denis Sušić

Danijela Milijic  
Astrit Alihajdaraj  
Karim Darwiche

Carmen Alvarez  
Yara Alvarez  
Evan Alvarez

Jennifer Perez  
Yara-Zoë Paparo  
Liam Uribe Ogando

Babo Divjak  
Vito Divjak

Daniel Hajdu  
Nikola Sosic

Nadi  
in co-operation with Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin

Karim Daoud

Anna Novak  
Herr Dietsche  
Herr Obermüller  
Liam Brugger

Linda Olsansky  
Nicolas Rosat  
Oscar Sales Bingisser  
Sean Douglas

Kita Angestellte  
Polizistin  
Polizist  
Arbeiterin  
Grossmutter Sušić

Fritz Bisenz  
Irene Eichenberger  
Jeremias Zimmerli  
Jensy Perez  
Andja Baumgartner

### Written & Directed by

Karin Heberlein

### Produced by

Claudia Wick

### DOP

Gabriel Lobos

### Production Design

Marlen Grassinger

### Editor

Marion Tuor

### Musik

Dominique Dreier and

Kilian Spinnler  
with original songs by  
Danitsa, Ikan Hyu,  
Naomi Lareine,  
Caroline Alves

### Originalton

Ivo Schläpfer

### Costume Design

Regina Gyr

### Make-up Artist

Sabine Flückiger

### Light Design

Greg Amgwerd

### Dialogue Editor & Mix

Guido Keller

### Sound Design

Daniel Hobi

### Script Consultation

Christopher von  
Delhaes, Angela  
Gilges

### Production Manager Production Assistant

Michela Pini  
Tanja Sahli

### 1st Assistant Director 2nd Assistant Director Script / Continuity

Giorgia De Coppi  
Debby Caplunik  
Jelena Pavlovic

### Casting

Karin Heberlein,  
Annette Carle  
Corinna Glaus  
Antonella Barone,  
Debby Caplunik  
Linda Olsansky

### Casting Assistance Casting Extras

### Coaching Cast Prep

### Focus Puller

Delia Schiltknecht

### 2nd AC Data Manager

Natalie Wallrapp  
John von Ascheraden

### Gaffer Stage, Light Dept.

Sebastian Suter  
Elia Quadri

### Art Department

Annina Geeser,  
Andrea Schmidlin  
Natalina Zainal  
Anne Sommer  
Gary Vergara

### Props Art Department, Stage Set Construction

### Wardrobe Wardrobe Assist

Regina Gyr  
Jeanne Milani

### Perch

Stefan Nobir,  
Jan Gubser

### Location Manager

Lukas Piccolin,

	Julian Underwood		Susanne Hofer.
<b>Set Management</b>	Niklas Leu, Lars Leu	<b>Still Photography</b>	Nelly Rodriguez
<b>Location Scouting</b>	Bee Eglin, appleshot	<b>Translations Transcript</b>	Emma Simonett, Jim Robin Schlupp Danijela Milijic Andrea Samborski Emma Simonett
<b>Catering</b>	Anton Norudin, Apicius 09, Wetzikon	<b>Serbo Croatian English French</b>	
<b>Stunt double Stunt coordinator Stunt driver/Safety Rigger Bicycle Stunt Construction</b>	Momo Kunz Marcel Stucki Roland Siegenthaler Marcel Stucki, Greg Amgwerd	<b>Accounting</b>	Hansjörg Bachmann, zahlwerk Zürich
<b>Grip, Car mount</b>	Till Schlatter, Yves Seger	<b>Equipment Camera Equipment Light</b>	OCTAMAS AG, Zürich FTK Film Techniker Kollektiv, Zürich Leuchtturm, Zürich
<b>Grading Visual Effects Editing Assistant Foley</b>	Yves Roy Vallaster Joel Helmlinger Fabienne Koch Olaf Simon	<b>Car Mount</b>	8horses Zürich Magnetix Zürich Andromeda Zürich
<b>Illustrations Titles</b>	Marion Deuchars, London	<b>Postproduction Video Postproduction Audio Deliveries</b>	
<b>Design Titles</b>	Brigae Haelg,		

## Technical specifications

Format 4:3  
Red camera  
HD

DCP 25 fps

Length 94 minutes

Language : Swissgerman, spanish, serbo-croatian

Subtitles  
English  
German/French

Filmed in Zurich Affoltern, July 2019

ISAN 0000-0005-A04C-0000-L-0000-0000-B



ABRAKADABRA  
■■■ *films* ■■■

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