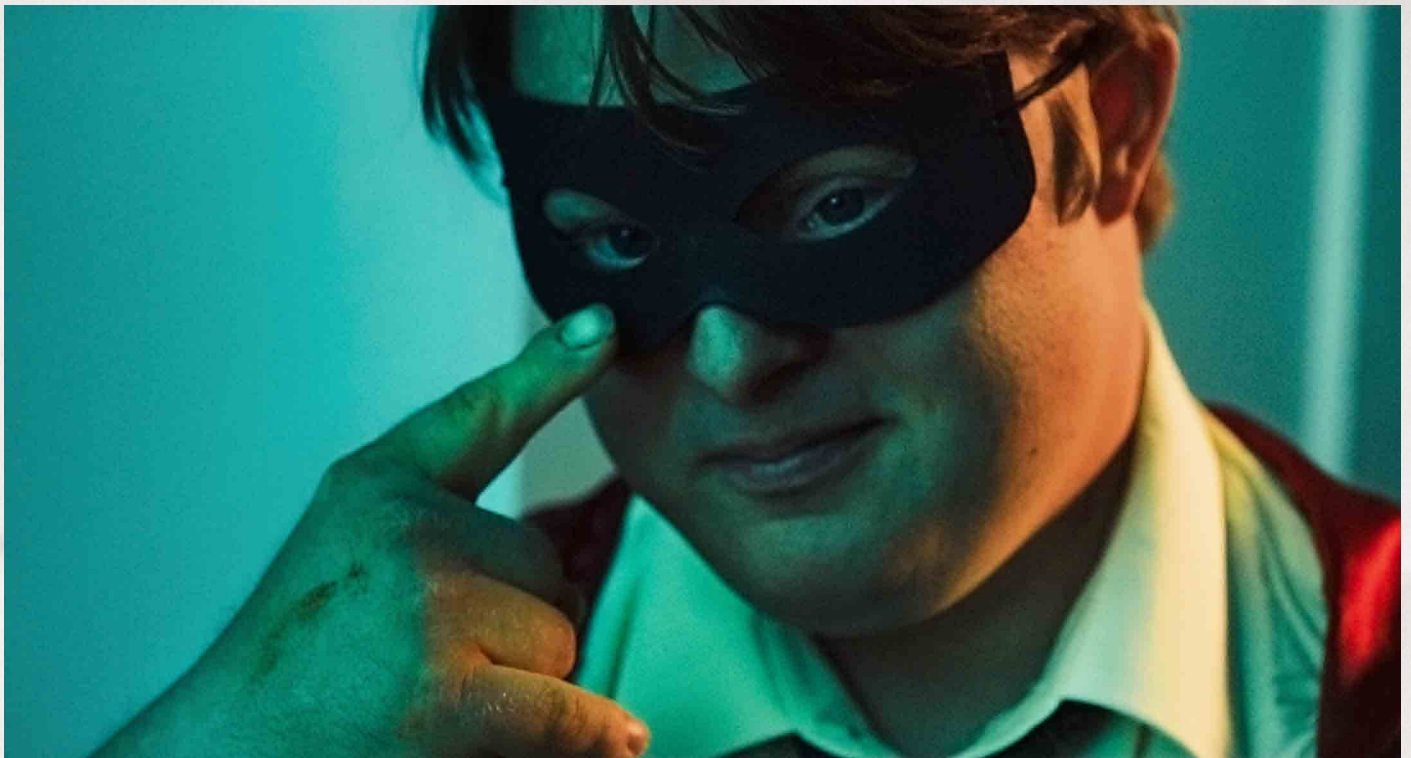


SUPER HERO

DIGITAL PRESS KIT

a short film by ÉMILE V. SCHLESSER



SUPERHERO

SUPERHERO is a fantastical 12-minute short film about a superhero with Down syndrome, written and directed by Émile V. Schlessler, starring Maria Dragus, Jannik Schümann and Nico Randel.

watch [TRAILER](https://vimeo.com/386854452) vimeo.com/386854452

visit [WEBSITE](http://superhero-film.com) superhero-film.com

KITE ROCK
PICTURES

MARIA
DRAGUS

JANNIK
SCHÜPANN

NICO
RANDEL

Super Hero

a picture by
ÉMILIE V. SCHLESSER

produced by FABIEN COLAS

FILM FUND
LUXEMBOURG

oe ŒUVRE
Nationale de Séjours
Grande-Duchesse Charlotte

Logline (EN)

A young man with Down syndrome stakes on a superhero identity to muster the courage to profess his love to a childhood friend.

Synopsis (EN)

Max, a young man with Down syndrome, stakes on a superhero identity to muster the courage to profess his love to a childhood friend. Showing up uninvited at her farewell party, he soon finds himself involved in a test of courage which goes horribly wrong.

Logline (FR)

Un jeune homme atteint de trisomie 21, adopte une identité de super-héros pour trouver le courage de déclarer son amour à une amie d'enfance.

Synopsis (FR)

Max, un jeune homme atteint de trisomie 21, adopte une identité de super-héros pour trouver le courage de déclarer son amour à une amie d'enfance. Il se présente à sa soirée d'adieu sans y avoir été invité, mais se trouve vite impliqué dans une épreuve d'audace qui tourne horriblement mal.

Logline (DE)

Ein junger Mann mit Down-Syndrom nimmt die Identität eines Superhelden an, um den nötigen Mut aufzubringen, seiner Kindheitsfreundin seine Liebe zu gestehen.

Synopsis (DE)

Max, ein junger Mann mit Down-Syndrom, nimmt die Identität eines Superhelden an, um den nötigen Mut aufzubringen, einer Kindheitsfreundin seine Liebe zu gestehen. Uneingeladen taucht er auf ihrer Abschiedsparty auf, wo er sich jedoch schnell in eine Mutprobe verwickeln lässt, die fürchterlich aus dem Ruder läuft.



CAST

Nico Randel	„Max“
Maria Dragus	„Tess“
Jannik Schümann	„Sam“
Charlotte Woolfe	„Catherine“
Etienne Halsdorf	„Tim“

CREW (main)

Émile V. Schlessler	writer / director / editor / music composer / visual effects
Fabien Colas	producer
Joel Froome, ACS	director of cinematography
Christina Schaffer	production designer
Uli Simon	costume designer
Jasmine Schmit	hair & make up designer
Alain Goniva	sound engineer
Nilton Martins	extras casting
Michael Mann	stunts & special effects
Patrick Toufexis	gaffer
Pascal Charlier	key grip
Laurence Rexter-Baker	1st assistant director
Karoline Maes	production manager
Andrew Francis (Technicolor LA)	colorist
Aaron Baustert (Soundtastic)	sound mixer

Specifications

Film Title (original)	Superhero
Film Title (international /English)	Superhero
Film Type	Narrative Fiction, Short Film
Genres	Drama, Fantasy, Romance, (Sci-Fi)
Special Subject	Disability (Down syndrome)
Runtime	12 min 49 sec
Completion Date	10 January 2020
Country of Origin	Luxembourg/ USA
Country of Filming	Luxembourg
Film Language	German
Subtitles	English (burnt in)
Shooting Format	Digital (UHD) on Arri Alexa Mini
Aspect Ratio	1:2.39 (DCP) / 1:2.40 (.MOV)
Film Color	Color
Screening Format	DCP (non encrypted)/ .MOV
Framerate	24 fps

Original Script	Yes
Original Music	Yes
Music Rights Cleared	Yes

Film Website	superhero-film.com
Facebook Page	facebook.com/superherofilm
Instagram	instagram.com/superherofilm
Twitter	twitter.com/film_superhero

Production Company	Kite Rock Pictures
Financiers	Filmfund Luxembourg, Oeuvre Nationale Grand-Duchesse Charlotte

Production contact

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 Germany
 Phone +352661117875
 Email info@emileschlessler.com

writer-director

ÉMILE V. SCHLESSER



Born in Luxembourg, Émile studied art and film at the historic *Kunstakademie Düsseldorf* in Germany, as master student of Marcel Odenbach.

His body of work stretches from narrative film to immersive installations, sculptures, video and painting.

He's based in Düsseldorf.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Superheroes with Down syndrome

Above having had the chance to work with two of Europe's most accomplished young talents, MARIA DRAGUS ('The White Ribbon', Michael Haneke) and JANNIK SCHÜMANN ('Submergence', Wim Wenders), stands the experience of working with NICO RANDEL, our lead actor. His heartwarming earnestness, pureness, courage and enthusiasm made this project one that I am very grateful for.



producer

FABIEN COLAS



Fabien Colas is a Luxembourgish producer based in Los Angeles, USA.

In 2017 Fabien founded KITE ROCK PICTURES, an LA-based start-to-finish film production company, creating commercials, music videos, short films, digital content and feature films.

After studying in Brighton and London, Fabien moved to Los Angeles in 2014 to set up his own company and shift from directing to producing. His work ranges from working with clients such as Vogue, Paper Magazine, Netflix, TAGHeuer, Playboy and Apple to working with acclaimed artists like Camilla Cabello, ASAP Rocky or Emeli Sande.

Fabien is moving more and more towards the narrative world with several features in development as well as TV shows that are being pitched around town.



cinematographer

JOEL FROOME



Joel Froome is a Cinematographer specializing in narrative and commercial work.

He graduated from the prestigious Australia Film, Television & Radio School where he learnt under instructors including Andrew Lesnie ACS ASC, John Seale ACS ASC, Jan Kenny ACS, Kim Batterham ACS and Anthony Dodd Mantle DFF ASC BSC to name a few.

A versatile collaborator skilled in bringing a director's vision to life, Joel's work has received numerous distinctions and awards from the Australian Cinematographers Society (ACS) and from various international film festivals.

In 2018, Joel was awarded the highest honor in Australian cinematography by being accredited by the Australian Cinematographers Society giving him the privilege of using the letters ACS after his name.

He is based out of Sydney, Australia and New York where he lives with his family.



"Max"

NICO RANDEL



A versatile artist, Nico's talent and passion aren't narrowed down to acting, but include a variety of artistic means of expression.

Based in Cologne, Germany, his body of work includes paintings, drawings and typography. As an actor, he is very active on the theatre stage since 2006 - not only as actor, but also as director: He has directed several stage plays, as well as his own cinematic productions.

Nico starred in german film and television productions like "Be My Baby", "Extraklasse", and "Alles Wird Gut", which premiered at the Berlinale (Berlin International Film Festival) in 2012.

FILMOGRAPHY

2018 Extraklasse (TV Movie), directed by Matthias Tiefenbacher

2014 Be My Baby, directed by Christina Schiewe

2012 Alles Wird Gut (Documentary) , directed by Nico von Glasow



"Tess"

MARIA DRAGUS



German-Romanian actress Maria Dragus is one of the most promising talents in Germany. In 2010 she received the German Film Award as best supporting actress for her performance in Michael Haneke's drama *THE WHITE RIBBON* (*DAS WEISSE BAND*). Under the direction of acclaimed Romanian filmmaker Christian Mungiu, she took on the lead in his film *GRADUATION* (*BACALAUREAT*), which won the best director and best screenplay at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016. In 2014 she received the Shooting Stars Award at the Berlinale. Most recently Maria Dragus starred in the highly acclaimed feature *LICHT* by Barbara Albert, and *MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS* by Josie Rourke, starring Margot Robbie and Saoirse Ronan.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 2018 *Mary Queen of Scots* directed by Josie Rourke
- 2017 *Licht* (*Mademoiselle Paradis*) directed by Barbara Albert
- 2017 *Tiger Girl* directed by Jakob Lass
- 2016 *Graduation* directed by Christian Mungiu
- 2016 *24 Weeks* directed by Anne Zohra Berrached
- 2016 *Das Weisse Band* (*The White Ribbon*) , directed by Michael Haneke



"Sam"

JANNIK SCHÜMANN



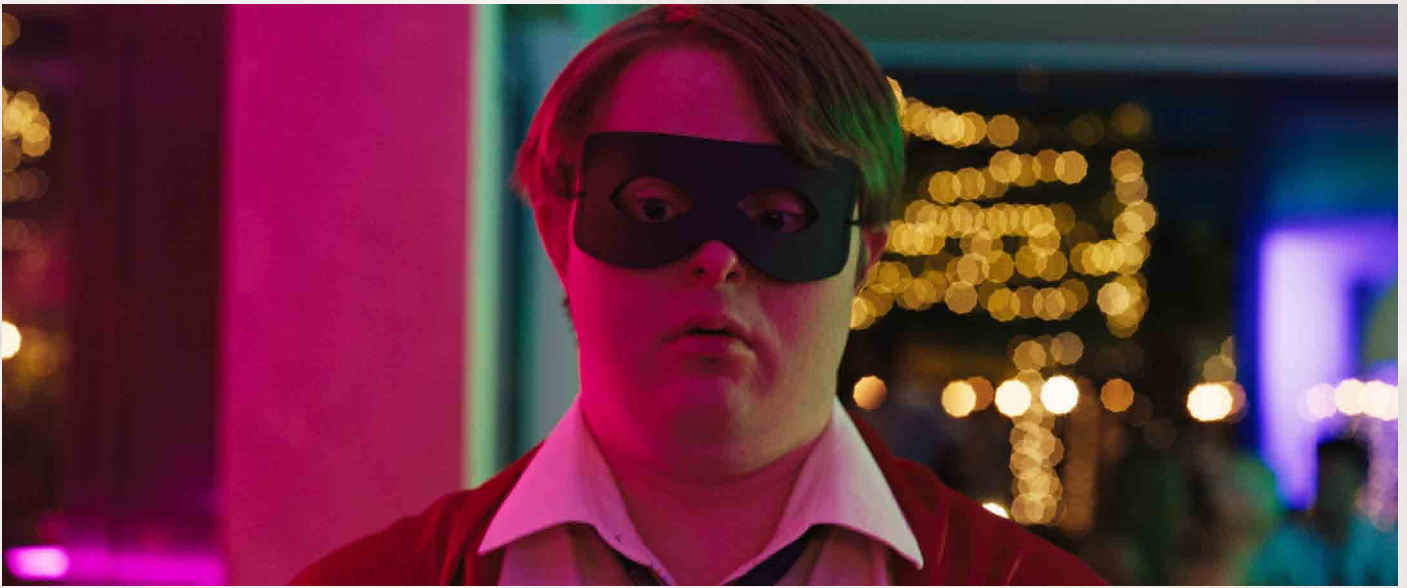
Jannik Schümann is regarded as one of the most prolific up-and-coming stars in Germany. In 2011 he won wide recognition and was nominated for the 'New Faces Award' for his role as 'Henry' in Kilian Riedhof's *HOMEVIDEO*, which was followed by *BARBARA* by Christian Petzold, premiering in competition at the Berlinale International Film Festival in 2012. After his success as tormented transsexual in *MY SON HELEN* by Gregor Schnitzler, he has since appeared in films like *JUGEND OHNE GOTT* (2017) and *DEM HORIZONT SO NAH* (2019). Under the direction of Wim Wenders, he starred in his 2017 thriller *SUBMERGENCE* alongside James McAvoy and Alicia Vikander, which he followed up by taking on the role as young german Nazi in James Kent's *AFTERMATH*, starring Keira Knightley.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

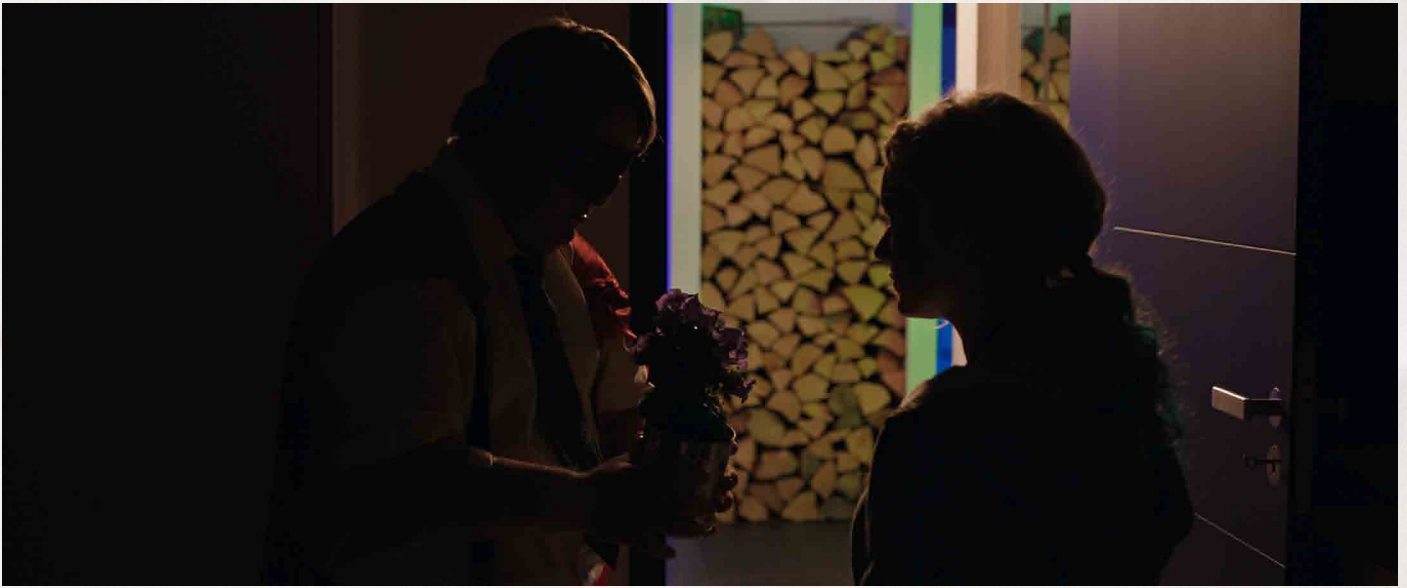
- 2019 9 Tage wach directed by Damian John Harper
- 2019 Dem Horizont so nah directed by Tim Trachte
- 2019 The Aftermath directed by James Kent
- 2017 Submergence directed by Wim Wenders
- 2017 Jugend ohne Gott directed by Alain Gsponer
- 2016 Die Mitte der Welt directed by Jakob M. Erwa
- 2012 Barbara directed by Christian Petzold



Stills



Stills



INTERVIEW WITH ÉMILE V. SCHLESSER

(The New Current, 23 April 2020)

Can you tell me a little bit about Superhero, how did this film come about?

It was one of those things that seem like they autonomously materialize themselves. We got lucky on so many occasions during this project, that it felt like life wanted us to do this right, or something. Uncanny coincidences with unexpectedly positive consequences, and even some major set-backs that in the end turned out to be a huge gain. We got all the right people for cast and crew, and the team was unanimously psyched about this project. The basic story elements I had simmering in my head for six or seven years before I even started to put it on paper. In its core it's very personal and it deals with issues that bugged me for a long time. So while in Cannes in 2018, I handed the finished script to my producer - who also happens to be my best friend - Fabien Colas, and we immediately decided to do it. After luckily being granted financing through two institutions in Luxembourg, the first thing we did was ask Australian-American cinematographer Joel Froome to be my DP. And despite our expectations and living on the other side of the globe - again - he agreed. He and Fabien had my back all the way. Since this is arguably my first real production as writer-director shooting my own material, I was pretty nervous at first. But after take one I felt so at ease, like I've never done anything else in my life.

What inspired you to make a film that would feature, for the first time, a superhero with Down Syndrome?

I didn't consciously set out to make a film 'about' Down syndrome, or even a character with this genetic trait for that matter. In fact, the first drafts of the script introduced Max as merely socially challenged. The reason it later evolved into a character with Down syndrome is because, while rewriting the script, I remembered a childhood friend who had trisomy, and who was always treated differently from the other kids. It then occurred to me that this story is essentially about masks - the personae we all wear in our lives and socioenvironment, to conform and behind which we hide our vulnerable selves. What characterizes people with Down syndrome is that they do not possess such a social mask. Their behaviour, words and actions are earnest and unfiltered. So in a way, the only character who's wearing an actual mask in the film, is the only one who ironically doesn't wear a mask. I also liked the idea that a superhero, who is more than a mere human, would consequently need to possess a surplus of chromosomes in comparison. 47 instead of 46, in the case of Down syndrome. It made complete sense and added an immense richness.

How did you go about casting Superhero?

We had very limited resources, so at first my producer understandably wanted the film to be shot in Luxembourgish with local actors, for budgetary and logistic reasons. But I insisted on casting an actor with Down syndrome in the lead, and since we couldn't find anybody with acting experience in Luxembourg, I began searching in Germany. Changing the film's language also gave me the opportunity to try and reach out to actors I've admired for a long time, and who would be perfect for these roles - Maria Dragus and Jannik Schümann - two of the most interesting young talents in Germany. My producer thought I was crazy to contact such accomplished actors for such a small project... but one can always ask. We gave it a shot and sent the script to their agents. And a week later, against all expectations, I got a call from Jannik, telling me how much he liked it and that he wanted to be part of it. This was such a blessing. From there on, many elements just miraculously fell into place. Coincidentally, a day after our phone call, Jannik ran into Maria Dragus and her agent at a party in Berlin. Turns out they have been waiting for a chance to work together, so Jannik convinced her to come aboard. These things don't usually happen in real life. So grateful. I owe a lot to Jannik.

Superhero features the debut of newcomer Nico Randel, how did you go about casting Nico in the lead?

Finding Nico was an absolute blessing. I insisted on casting an actor with the same genetic characteristic as the protagonist. I never would have condoned casting a 'normal' actor posing as a character with disability. You just can't do that, the days of Leo as Arnie Grape are long gone. And what Nico brought to this project exceeded my expectations by far. I discovered Nico after a long and arduous search online and many phone calls. I found his website and saw that he not only had a bit of acting experience (mainly on stage) but that he's also a very versatile artist: he paints, draws, exhibits his work and even directed a few stage plays. So I immediately felt this kinship between us. I reached out to his parents, who are also his managers, I met them in Cologne and we clicked right away. I completely fell in love with his earnestness, pureness, humour, courage and enthusiasm. And considering he's extremely afraid of heights, the man's fearless. He really elevated the whole thing.

What was the most challenging scene for you to film?

The very first and the very last scene we shot - but for very different reasons. The first one being logistically the easiest (the love letter scene) but which was paramount to get right in tone and performance, since it's the heart of the story. There was no time to rehearse, so it took us many takes to hit that note just perfectly. I think some of us already lost their nerve right then and there, on the first set up.

The last scene we shot was the ending. The special effects, the crane, the crowd, the dolly tracks, everything was logistically cumbersome and we had to be done by sunrise. But the best part is that the caterer screwed up that night, so we lost a couple of hours before we could even begin. By the time we got to the important stuff, we had to rush it so bad that we were forced to reduce the shot list to the bare necessities, and could do only one take for each shot. Compromising like mad - the side of filmmaking I really loath. But we did it. We literally wrapped 20 seconds before the sun came up.

Honourable mention: the underwater scene. Never underestimate underwater shoots!

And finally, what do you hope people will take away from Superhero?

I find this a rather tough question to answer. I wouldn't want to impose anything on the audience. People take away what they will from Superhero. I think there's enough to inspire thought and discussion. At the very least I hope that it's 12 minutes well spent and not easily forgotten...



Behind the scenes



Behind the scenes

