

SAD JOKES

FABIAN STUMM
HALEY LOUISE JONES
ULRICA FLACH
JONAS DASSLER

GODEHARD GIESE MARIE-LOU SELLEM ANNE HAUG KNUT BERGER A FILM BY
HILDEGARD SCHROEDTER ANNEKE KIM SARNAU AND JUSTUS MEYER FABIAN STUMM

EDITED BY MICHAEL BENNETT CAMERA ASSISTANTS JOSEFIN HEINRICH STEFAN RUTKOWSKI SOUND ANDREA SCHMIDT COSTUME DESIGNER KADJAR PANIZZA GRADING BERTRAND GLOSSET
PRODUCTION DESIGNER & MIX BÉLA BRANDES GROOMING EVA ROTH ART DIRECTION NELE SCHALLENBERG COSTUME DESIGNER ANVA HELLMANN MAKEUP ARIANA METZLAPP GRAPHICS OTTERHELLMANN
CO-PRODUCTION NELE SCHALLENBERG WIEBKE WESSELMANN PRODUCTION FABIAN STUMM NICOLA HEIM PRODUCER LUCIE TAMBORINI ASSISTANT DIRECTOR NICOLA HEIM
WRITER & DIRECTOR FABIAN STUMM A POSTOFILM PRODUCTION WORLD SALES SALZGEBER | SALZGEBER.DE/SADJOKES POSTOFILM SALZGEBER



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SAD JOKES

SYNOPSIS

Joseph (Fabian Stumm) and Sonya (Haley Louise Jones) are close friends who are raising their young son Pino together. Joseph is working on a new film idea and struggling, for several years now, to move on from the breakup with his ex-boyfriend Marc (Jonas Dassler); while Sonya is suffering from a depression that increasingly tears her out of her life. When Sonya checks herself into a clinic to recover, Joseph is forced to juggle parenting, romantic possibilities, and his artistic ambitions.

In his second feature, Writer/Director Fabian Stumm mixes different moods to create a cinematic friction with reality. SAD JOKES is absurdly funny and banal, hopeful and heartbreaking or – like real life – all at once.

SALZGEBER

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SAD JOKES

a film by Fabian Stumm

DE 2024, 96 minutes, German-English-Swedish-Italian OV,
 English subtitles

Cast

Fabian Stumm	Joseph
Haley Louise Jones	Sonya
Justus Meyer	Pino
Ulrica Flach	Elin
Jonas Dassler	Marc
Godehard Giese	Gero
Marie-Lou Sellem	Alexandra Alexandra
Anne Haug	Sophie
Knut Berger	Dominik
Hildegard Schroedter	Conny
Nicola Heim	Alice
Tina Pfurr	Cosima
Anneke Kim Sarnau	Steffi
Susie Meyer	Dr. Hartmann
Romina Küper	Schwester Julia
Doreen Fietz	Diane
Marco Ippoliti	Massimo
Rahel Savoldelli	Doro
Sebastian Schipper	Sebastian
Max Krumm	Eric

Crew

Writer & Director	Fabian Stumm
Cinematography	Michael Bennett
Camera Assistants	Josefin Heinrich Stefan Rutkowski
Editor	Kaspar Panizza
Sound	Andrea Schmidt
Sound Design & Mix	Béla Brandes
Music Supervisor	Ramin Bijan
Art Direction	Nele Schallenberg
Costume	Anna Hellmann
Costume Assistant	Belle Santos
Make-Up	Adriana Metzlauff
Additional Make-Up	Melissa Döberl
Casting	Eva Roth
Graphics	otterhellmann
Grading	Bertrand Glosset
Assistant Director	Nicola Heim
Set Runner	Anya Williams Valentina Maria Schneck Maud Sellem
Producer	Lucie Tamborini
Co-Production	Nele Schallenberg Wiebke Wesselmann
Production	Fabian Stumm Nicola Heim

A Postofilm production

World sales Salzgeber



INTERVIEW WITH FABIAN STUMM

“Sad Jokes” is your second film, released just under a year after your debut. How did it come about so quickly?

“Bones and Names” has opened up a new world to me. It was fascinating to see the film make its way into the public eye, giving me the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the audience. During the festival tour, I lived in a kind of bubble for several months and quickly felt the need to write to stay connected with myself. Alongside the many beautiful moments, I wanted to leave space for my uncertainties and fears. The result was “Sad Jokes”. I wrote the screenplay in hotels, trains, and airports. I wanted to incorporate real life as much as possible and be sincere, but always give myself permission to lie and transform reality into fiction. It’s a film about persevering. About ways to care for the people you love, even when you’re apart. And about the ability to forgive. About how life can be cruel, funny, hopeful, and sometimes everything at the same time.

“Bones and Names” is a drama with comedic elements, “Sad Jokes” could now be described as a comedy with dramatic moments.

That’s correct. I wanted to build on the lightness of “Bones and Names”, turn up the dials and let deeply sad scenes and slapstick moments collide. I’m interested in the fractures that result from this. It was great fun to explore cinematic humor. The comedies of Loriot, Charlie Chaplin, Ernst Lubitsch, Nanni Moretti, or François Truffaut have influenced me since I was young. Sincerity and silliness often lie close together in them, which I find very beautiful and worth telling.

“Sad Jokes” is about the filmmaker Joseph, whose life increasingly turns upside down. You are once again your own lead actor. Was that planned from the beginning?

Absolutely. Especially because of the autofictional meta-level of the film, I wanted to play the role myself. However, like with my last film, the story is not purely autobiographical but is composed of many mosaic pieces that I or people around me have experienced in a similar way. For example, shortly after the premiere of “Bones and Names”, I broke a finger, quite banally while playing with my dog. In the film, Joseph gets his finger stuck in a snack vending machine – so that’s a conscious



exaggeration. I then worked the diffuse fear that actually arose in me before the operation into the long hospital sequence like a sketch and used it as a springboard.

“Bones and Names” was compared to Robert Altman’s ensemble films in some reviews. For “Sad Jokes”, you were able to gather a great cast around you again.

This comparison made me incredibly happy and naturally quite humble. Robert Altman is one of the most important directors for me. I love the freedom of his films, his way of directing ensembles, and his refusal to follow a classic narrative. He saw his cast as a troupe, to which players can join and develop together if they understand each other and speak a similar language in their work. The casting director Eva Roth wonderfully supported me here again.

Haley Louise Jones plays an important role in the story this time.

Yes. I was very moved by her brief cameo in “Bones and Names” and really wanted to direct her in a larger role. Haley has an incredible passion in her

work. She plays Sonya, a mother struggling with severe depression, and because I have a connection to this topic on the side of my family, it was important to me to show a nuanced picture of it. Haley gave me and the film a great gift with her performance.

How did the Swedish actress Ulrica Flach come to the project?

Ulrica and I met over twenty years ago at drama school in New York and never saw each other again afterwards. While writing, the idea of making her character Swedish and casting her stuck with me. During our first Zoom, it was as if no time had passed since our last encounter. For me, the story of our reunion is proof of how art can unexpectedly bring us together and reconnect us.

Jonas Dassler has a very touching appearance as Joseph’s ex-boyfriend.

I am very grateful that Jonas took on this role. It’s not easy to sketch a character in just one scene. I try to treat even small roles as if they were the main characters in their own film, which they are when you think about it. Jonas is an actor who can con-



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vey a lot with few words. He has a gentleness and openness in his performance that I particularly appreciate.

Indeed, it feels like all the supporting actors must have had a lot of fun...

They did. Godehard Giese as a slightly overbearing producer, Marie-Lou Sellem and Anne Haug as a pair of actresses newly in love, Knut Berger as a nude model who falls in love with Joseph, Anneke Kim Sarnau as a hyper patient on painkillers, Hildegard Schroedter as Sonya's mother seeking happiness through online dating, or Tina Pfurr as an overwhelmed first aider – everyone was there with great attention to detail and put a lot of effort into their roles. We had a really great time filming together.

“Bones and Names” was filmed in German and French, in “Sad Jokes” German, English, Italian, and Swedish are spoken. You seem to consciously not want to settle on one language.

That's correct. Language is always a way for me to broaden my perspective. It's exciting what paths of communication open up when you don't speak

the same language but have to communicate. My next projects are set in Belgium and Italy, among other places, and being a German filmmaker, I will naturally look at a foreign country from a different angle. What connections are there and what are the differences? It is important to me not to set geographical limits in my work. I find it enriching that cinema offers us all this possibility.



BIOGRAPHIES

Fabian Stumm (Director, Writer, Producer; Joseph) works as actor, author and director. He studied at the Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute New York and has since appeared on stage at HAU – Hebbel am Ufer, Münchner Kammerspiele, Volksbühne Berlin, in The Kitchen New York and Tate Modern London. His film and TV works include “Lore by Cate Shortland, “Bela Kiss” by Lucien Förstner, “Precious Ivie” by Sarah Blaßkiewitz and the series “Druck” and “Oh Hell”.

In 2020 he gave his directorial debut with the short film “Bruxelles”. 2021 followed his second film “Daniel” that was awarded best medium-length film at the Achtung Berlin Festival. His feature film debut “Bones and Names” premiered at the 2023 Berlinale in the Perspektive Deutsches Kino section and won the Heiner Carow Prize. In 2024, Marie-Lou Sellem was nominated for the German Film Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in the film. “Sad Jokes” is his second feature film. Following its celebrated world premiere at the Filmfest München, “Sad Jokes” received two major awards there: the German Cinema New Talent Award (Best Director) and the FIPRESCI Award.

Filmography as director:

2020 „Bruxelles“ (short film)
2021 „Daniel“ (middle length film)
2023 „Knochen und Namen“
2024 „Sad Jokes“

Haley Louise Jones (Sonya) played her first leading role in the film “Precious Ivie” by Sarah Blaßkiewitz, for which she was awarded Best Actress at the Achtung Berlin Film Festival. This was followed by roles in the Netflix productions “Paradise” by Boris Kunz and “Liebes Kind” by Isabel Kleefeld & Julian Pörksen. Next up, she will appear in the drama “Blindgänger” by Kerstin Polten and the series “KraNK” by Fabian Möhrke and Alex Schaad. For “Bones and Names” by Fabian Stumm, she was nominated for the German Acting Award 2023.

Ulrica Flach (Elin) studied acting in Gothenburg and at the Lee Strasberg Theatre & Film Institute New York. After several stage engagements, she founded her own theatre company, Pelikanteatern, in 2003. Her film and TV work includes “I Want You to Run” by Jacob Schill, “Smink” by Kristian A. Söderström, and “Fallet – Hagamannen” by Reza Parsa. “Sad Jokes” marks her first role in a feature film.

Jonas Dassler (Marc) studied at the Ernst Busch Academy of Dramatic Arts and has since appeared in many film projects, including “Lomo – The Language of Many Others” by Julia Langhof, for which he was awarded the First Steps Award, “Never Look Away” by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, and “The Silent Revolution” by Lars Kraume. For Fatih Akin’s “The Golden Glove,” he was nominated for the German Film Award in 2019 and was chosen as a Berlinale Shooting Star. He will soon be seen in the thriller “Berlin Nobody” by Jordan Scott.