

Studio Ruba, NTR & SKOOP Media present:

Kiddo

Netherlands, 2023, 91 min.

PRESS NOTES

**A film by
Zara Dwinger**

World premiere
Berlinale 2023
Berlinale Generation K-PLUS



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LOGLINE

Eleven-year-old Lu is living in a foster home when her long-lost mother Karina shows up unexpectedly and takes her on a wild road trip in a beat-up sports car - all the way to her grandma in Poland. Lu soon finds out it's all or nothing with Karina when she gets pulled into a Bonnie and Clyde-like fantasy. But reality quickly catches up, forcing them to decide what they're willing to do to stay together forever.

SYNOPSIS

Eleven-year-old Lu dreams of seeing her estranged mother Karina again. Karina is in Hollywood living a movie star life, even doing her own stunts - supposedly. She promised to be back soon, but that was a long time ago. Lu's wish finally seems to come true when a call reaches her foster home, announcing the visit of her mum. Lu is excited to spend an afternoon with her mother, but Karina has bigger plans. Ready to be her mum again, she takes her daughter on a roadtrip in her run-down sports car to visit Lu's grandma all the way in Poland. Karina wants to pick up a pile of money she hid there years ago, so they can start over and stay together forever. Lu makes her mother promise, and allows herself to dream about her new home.

But a roadtrip with Karina is never one without any bumps. Karina screams at the top of her lungs everyday to keep herself from going insane, and to Lu's excitement she likes to disregard rules. Even the trip itself is not permitted, and Lu has to lie to her foster mom about being on the run with Karina. Lu doesn't mind at first; she'll do everything to stay together. Both mother and daughter lose themselves in a Bonnie & Clyde-like fantasy: they wear wigs and caps to stay in disguise, steal a stranger's birthday cake while on a nightly run through a motel, and dine and dash at a Polish restaurant.

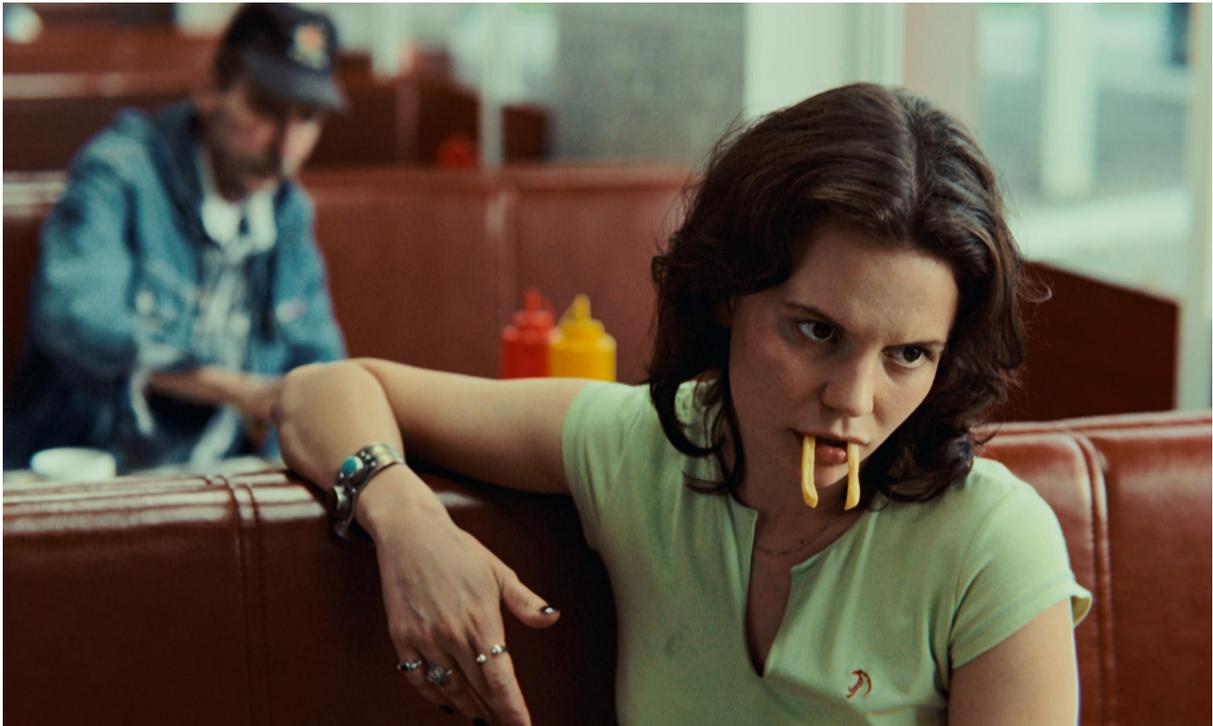
During the journey Lu gets to know her mother as she opens up about her past, and they grow closer. But even Clyde gets homesick sometimes. Lu finds herself at a crossroad: as much as she wants to stay with her mother forever, she can't keep stepping over her own boundaries just to keep up with her. The lying is gnawing at her, and Karina might not have been honest about everything either. Promises are broken once again. What started out as an adventurous road trip, rekindling an imperfect mother-daughter relationship, ends up taking an unexpected turn and shows Lu how to stand up for herself. 'All or nothing' is Karina's life motto, but Lu starts to realise that sometimes it's better to have 'just a bit' instead.

INFO

2023 | Netherlands | Tragicomedy, Road movie | 91 min

Language: Dutch, English, Polish

Screening Format: DCP



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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

KIDDO started when co-writer Nena van Driel and I decided we wanted to tell a story about having an eccentric and unconventional parent. We were captivated by this subject on a personal level. We wanted to explore how dealing with this as a child can be both confusing and disappointing, while simultaneously crazy enough to enrich your life at times, as well. We wrote the story from the perspective of a child, but I can identify with the mother in the story, too. Female outcasts are a recurring type of character in my work; women just outside of the norm. In this film I wanted to explore how the struggle with mental health and fitting in in the world manifests itself in a child-parent relationship.

Both characters are outsiders in a way. Lu lives in an unconventional foster home, is a dreamer with a great imagination and a love for snakes. Karina is an outsider in many ways: she's not raising her daughter, keeps running away from things and prefers to live a life of fantasy. You could put many psychiatric labels on her, but let's "f*ck labels" as she would say. She's more like a grown up kid. In some ways, Lu is more adult than her. But Lu just wants a mom. This counterpoints with the way Karina thinks she should be a mom. Her motto is "all or nothing", but in the end "all or just a bit" may be a better way for them to have a relationship.

Tone was important in telling this story, as I wanted this film not only to be about a 11-year old, but also for 11-year olds. That's why I wanted to lift up these darker themes into a playful and larger than life tale where sadness and unease goes hand in hand with fun and humour. Isn't that the way it works in real life as well? And although this story is about a mother and her kid at the surface, you could say it's more about two kids - one just happens to be grown up. This lent itself to have fun in the writing and fully take on the lovers-on-the-run genremix. In the end I hope the audience will both smile, laugh and wipe away a tear while on the road with our duo.

Eventually Lu stands up for herself, something that's important to learn when you're in a relationship with an unpredictable parent. Dealing with such a parent in all its horrible wonderfulness can be empowering, whether you like it or not. That to me is very important, to share characters and conflict within a grey area of life with a younger audience, both realistically as with a glint of hope.

Zara Dwinger, 2023

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR / CO-SCREENWRITER

Zara Dwinger

Zara Dwinger (1990, Amsterdam) is a writer-director who makes visually stylised and playful films with a heart. She gravitates towards stories about young people finding their place in the world, one way or another.

She studied Cultural Anthropology and worked for an online magazine, but finally ended up studying at the Dutch Film Academy as a director. There she made the colourful LIV (2016), featured on Short of the Week, and her critically acclaimed SIRENE (2017). The latter - a coming-of-age short about confusion and identity -



won several prizes internationally, premiered at Clermont-Ferrand and became Vimeo Staff Pick.

After graduating in 2017 she made two shorts: YULIA & JULIET (2018) - a contemporary take on Romeo & Juliet - which premiered at the Berlinale, as a Vimeo Staff Pick and has over 10 million views on Short of the Week. And secondly her screenwriting-debut A HOLIDAY FROM MOURNING (2020) - about a teenager's grief - selected for Palm Springs ShortFest. During the pandemic she wrote and directed the mid-length THE GIRL WHO WAS CURSED (2021) - a stoner-noir about a Turkish girl in a mysterious search for her neighbour - in collaboration with main actress Sinem Kavus. The film had its international premiere at Slamdance Film Festival 2023 and was selected for the Golden Calf Competition in the Netherlands.

She was recently selected as Talent En Route by the Dutch Film Festival, and in both Cinekid WritersLAB as DirectorsLAB. Her first feature KIDDO (2023) - a playful roadmovie for kids and adults alike, about an 11-year old girl who unexpectedly finds herself in a curious roadtrip with her estranged mother - will have its world premiere at the 73rd Berlinale in Generation Kplus.

Filmography

KIDDO | feature | director & co-writer | 2023 | 90'

THE GIRL WHO WAS CURSED | mid-length | director & writer | 2021 | 46'

A HOLIDAY FROM MOURNING | short | director & write | 2020 | 14'

YULIA & JULIET | short | director | 2018 | 11' | watch it [HERE!](#)

SIRENE | short | director | 2017 | 26' | watch it [HERE!](#)

LIV | short | director | 2016 | 12' | watch it [HERE!](#)

ABOUT THE ACTORS

Rosa van Leeuwen



Rosa was born in Amsterdam in 2011 and moved to Abcoude with her parents at the age of four. There she started drama lessons at the local theatre association. In 2020 Rosa obtained her first role in the film MIJN VADER IS EEN VLIEGTUIG by Antoinette Beumer. In it, Rosa played the young Eva, who could be seen in the flashbacks of the main character. The film opened the 2021 Dutch Film Festival.

In 2021 the shooting of the 8-part television series THE TERRIBLE EIGHTIES took place, which was broadcast on TV in early 2022. Rosa played the main character Piet. Piet has to cope with the absurd reality of an apartment group in the eighties.

The series is based on the novel of the same name by director Tim Kamps, the script was written by Kim van Kooten.

In the summer of 2022, Rosa played the main character of Lu in the film KIDDO by director Zara Dwinger. In this coming-of-age road movie, her estranged mother Karina (Frieda Barnhard) takes her to Poland. The trip gets out of hand and Lu keeps stepping over her boundaries to stay with her eccentric mother. The film will premiere at the 2023 Berlinale Generation festival in Berlin.

At the turn of 2022/2023, Rosa starred in a short film of the graduation project of students at the Netherlands Film Academy. As the character 'Indy', Rosa plays a girl from a less affluent family who is struggling to make ends meet. This film will premiere in July 2023.

Frieda Barnhard

Frieda graduated from the Amsterdam School of Drama & Kleinkunstacademie in 2018. During her studies, she performed at various festivals in performances such as LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL and THE THEORY ABOUT WHY by AllesFroh. In addition, she had an internship with the play THE PLAY THAT GOES WRONG by Bos Theaterproducties.

After graduation, Frieda performed at the Theatre Festival de Parade in Marvellous and in the Frascati production PROSPERO E MIRANDA (directed by Marijn Graven). In 2019, she was seen in AGE OF RAGE at the Toneelmakerij.

She held roles in the short films I CAN FLY (2017), RUN BABY RUN (2018), and EYES ON THE ROAD (2018). She also starred in TEEF (2019; Central) and was featured in the 2020 short film BIRDLAND. On television, Frieda shined in one of the lead roles in the Videoland/RTL series JUDAS. She also played guest roles in MOCRO MAFFIA, FLIKKEN MAASTRICHT and in the English-language series VAN DER VALK (2020).

In 2020 she could be seen in the first Dutch Netflix series ARES, in which she played one of the leading roles, as well as in the television series VLIEGENDE HOLLANDERS and DE EENLING. In 2021, Frieda took part in NO. 10 directed by Alex van Warmerdam.

(© Photo Frieda Barnhard: Anna Perger)



ABOUT THE CO-SCREENWRITER

Nena van Driel



Nena van Driel is an Amsterdam based rhythmic and intuitive screenwriter who has a nostalgic feel to her writing. Longing for times she didn't live; like Godards 60's, or Wong Karwai's 90s. But also her own history as a teenager and child form a big inspiration in her work. She's a romantic with a cynic twist, she likes light absurdity in her stories as in dialogue.

Nena graduated from the Dutch Film Academy in 2017. She has written episodes for the children's series MEES KEES DE SERIE. In 2019 she got a scholarship to experiment and dive into the Nouvelle Vague and conceptual writing. Together with director-writer Zara Dwinger she developed her first feature film KIDDO, a youth road film about unconventional motherhood. The film will premiere in 2023, as is the feature film MILK, about grief and finding poetry in human nature, which she wrote with director-writer Stefanie Kolk. Nena also wrote short and mid-length films: MAGMA, MA MÈRE ET MOI - both premiering in the Berlinale Generation section 2023 next to KIDDO - and MEMORY DEALERS, set to premiere in 2023.

Nena is currently working on the first steps of a new feature film script together with director Jan Verdijk. Next to her writing life, she coaches script developments and teaches screenwriting at the Dutch Film Academy.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

Having worked with Zara from the very start of our new production company, making two of her previous successful short and mid-length films together, we are very proud of this bittersweet feel good debut feature. Poland serves as the backdrop for this larger than life adventure our mother and daughter duo embark on, reimagined as a Hollywood-dream. The result takes the audience on an exciting, playful ride, and gives a fresh perspective on learning how to deal with an imperfect parent and protecting your own boundaries.

Layla Meijman & Maarten van der Ven, 2023

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION COMPANY

STUDIO RUBA is an Amsterdam based boutique production company founded in 2019 by producers Maarten van der Ven and Layla Meijman. With a select group of filmmakers, we focus on creating cinematic cutting-edge stories. Both producers have a hands-on mentality and knowledge on both the production and the creative side, handling all projects with great care.

In 2020 Ruba released their first short films, A HOLIDAY FROM MOURNING by Zara Dwinger and RE-ENTRY by Ben Brand. The following year we released two mid-length films, THE GIRL WHO WAS CURSED (SlamDance) by Zara Dwinger and SAVE IT by Amira Duynhouwer. In 2022 the company's debut feature film FEMI by Dwight Fagbamila was nominated for best actor at the Dutch Academy Awards premiered internationally at the Warsaw IFF. The company's second feature film KIDDO by Zara Dwinger will premiere in the Berlinale Generation K-plus competition 2023.

Upcoming projects that will be shot in 2023 are the co-production XENOS aka MEN IN THE SUN by the bafta nominated Mahdi Fleifel, black comedy THE IDYLL by Aaron Rookus (EAVE 2020) and the mid-length film, MEMORY DEALERS by Mila van der Linden.

Prior to the founding of Ruba, Layla and Maarten gained years of experience producing - and sometimes line producing - award winning feature films, shorts and documentaries such as TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE (2019) (Rotterdam IFF), BOY MEETS GUN (Busan) (2019), WATERBOYS (2016), and A GOAT FOR A VOTE (2014).



ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

Layla Meijman

Layla graduated from the Netherlands Film Academy in 2013 with the praised graduation film *EVEN COWBOYS GET TO CRY* (Berlinale Generation), for which she was awarded the FPN producers award. Straight out of film school she produced the pilot for the series *TREURTEEVIE* independently. The series was nominated for Best TV-drama at the Dutch Academy Awards.

Since 2014 she worked as a creative producer for established production company Pupkin, where she produced the following seasons of *TREURTEEVIE* and initiated several eye-catching projects such as the short film *IMPORT* (Cannes Directors Fortnight & TIFF) by Ena Sendijarevic and the feature films *TAKE ME SOMEWHERE NICE* (Tiger IFFR, L'Acid) by Ena Sendijarevic and *BOY MEETS GUN* (Busan) by Joost van Hezik. In 2019 Layla founded her own production company Studio Ruba together with Maarten van der Ven. Layla took part in the Berlinale Talent Campus (2014) and the ACE mentoring program (2022).

Maarten van der Ven

Maarten has a bachelor's degree in film-TV and Theatre Studies and graduated from the Netherlands Film Academy in 2009 producing the award-winning film *BINGO*. He started working at Isabella Films on a.o. *WINTER IN WARTIME* and after that as a line producer for renowned Dutch companies on films like *THE PETER PAN MAN* and *QUALITY TIME*. At the same time, he started his own production company *VENFILM* which has produced a dozen of prize-winning shorts and mid-length films including *P*, *A GOAT FOR A VOTE* and *THE DAY MY HOUSE FELL*. His first feature *WATERBOYS* got great reviews, drew 60.000 people to the cinema and was sold to over 30 countries. In 2020 Maarten took part in EAVE's Producers Workshop with *THE IDYLL*. He has also participated in the Creative Producers Lab at the Binger Filmlab and the Berlinale Talent Campus.

Filmography

KIDDO | feature film | 2023

Screenplay: Nena van Driel & Zara Dwinger | Director: Zara Dwinger | Co-Producer: SHIPsBOY (PL) | *World Premiere Berlinale Generation K-Plus 2023*

FEMI | debut feature film | 2022

Yannick Jozefzoon (main cast): European Shooting Star 2023 at Berlinale

Screenplay: Dwight Fagbamila & Kim Kokosky Deforchaux | Director: Dwight Fagbamila | Sales Agent: Media Luna

Festivals & Prizes: Warsaw International Film Festival - Free Spirit Competition, nomination Best Actor at Dutch Academy Awards 2022 (a.o.)

HENK | hybrid documentary | '25 | 2021
Directors: Sarah Blok & Lisa Konno

SAVE IT | single play | 2021
Writer & Director: Amira Duynhouwer
Festivals & Prizes: La Cabina winner Best Medium Length Film, Best Supporting Actress (a.o.)

THE GIRL WHO WAS CURSED | single play | 2021
Writer & Director: Zara Dwinger
Festivals & Prizes: SlamDance Narrative Feature competition 2023, Gouden Kalf Competitie NFF (a.o.)

A HOLIDAY FROM MOURNING | short | 2020
Writer & Director: Zara Dwinger
Festivals & Prizes: Gouden Kalf Competitie NFF, Asiana IFF, Palm Springs IFF 2020 (a.o.)

RE-ENTRY | short | 2020
Writer & Director: Ben Brand
Festivals & Prizes: Flickerfest, Busan ISF, Vimeo Staff Pick, Short of the Week (a.o.)



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CREDITS

CAST

Rosa van Leeuwen / Lu
Frieda Barnhard / Karina
Lidia Sadowka / Karina's cousin
Aisa Winter / Foster Mother
Maksymilian Rudnicki / Grzegorz

CREW

Director	Zara Dwinger
Screenplay	Nena van Driel, Zara Dwinger
Producers	Layla Meijman, Maarten van der Ven
Co-Producer	Marina Blok / NTR broadcasting
Service Producer	Krystyna Kantor, Joanna Szymańska PGP / SHIPsBOY
Line Producer	Maarten van der Ven
DOP	Douwe Hennink
Editor	Fatih Tura
Composer	Jac van Exter
Sound Design	Zita Leemans
Re-recording mixer	Michel Schöpping
Sound	Kamila Wójcik, Peter Strijbos
Production Design	Bram Doyer
Costume Design	Vita Mees
Makeup & Hair	Renee Wijnhoven
Casting	Saida van der Reijd, Małgorzata Lipmann
Kids Casting	Elske Falkena, Luca Meisters
First AD	Tony van der Veer
Gaffer	Janneke Hoogenboom
Assistant Director	Noen Brouwer
Music Supervisor	Laura Bell
Colorist	Joppo in de Grot
Visual Effects Supervisor	Luuk Meijer
Post Production Supervisor	Maarten de Graaf
Production manager	Mireille Crone-Rooijendijk, Alicja Jagodzińska-Kałkus
International sales	SKOOP Media
Domestic Sales (Netherlands)	GUSTO Entertainment
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