

A FILM BY
ERIC LAMHÈNE

BREATHING UNDERWATER

CARLA JURI ESPERANZA MARTIN GONZÁLEZ-QUEVEDO
VÉRONIQUE TSHANDA BEYA ALESSIA RASCHELLA



A woman's profile is shown in silhouette, looking out a window. The window has vertical blinds, and the light from outside creates a strong contrast with the dark interior. The woman's face is partially visible in profile, looking towards the right side of the frame.

LOGLINE

When Emma leaves her picture-perfect life for a women's shelter, her unlikely friendship with a ragtag group of women pushes them all into a fight to take back their power.



SYNOPSIS

BREATHING UNDERWATER tells the story of Emma, who is whisked away in the dead of night, covered in bruises and unexpectedly pregnant. As she grapples with her pregnancy and her emotional shackles to her husband Marc, Emma rediscovers lost facets of herself through her unlikely camaraderie and strife with the women and children of the shelter. Individual traumas intertwine and despite their differences, a delicate sisterhood emerges as they push one another to fight for their self-worth and independence.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I remember my initial visit to a women's shelter vividly. It was a modern but unassuming building that sat quietly amongst other family homes on a busy main street in Luxembourg city.

There was no name on the doorbell and no indication of what lay behind its doors. I didn't know what exactly to expect and inevitably the impressions of *misérabilisme* from existing films and media around the subject of domestic abuse began to flood my mind.

It was, however, nothing like I imagined. I had arrived at a house full of life and laughter, of joy even. It was house that was populated by a kaleidoscope of women and children of varying ages and of different nationalities. They lived, loved and pushed on, despite the complex and terrible reasons behind why they were there.

Co-author/cinematographer Rae Lyn Lee was with me that day and we both came away, deeply moved, captured and intrigued by the intellectual and emotional dichotomies of the women in the shelter.

This was absolutely a story we wanted to tell and we knew that we had to tell it right.

We immersed ourselves in the subject, working with all the women's shelters in Luxembourg, speaking at length to psychologists, social workers, lawyers and organizations dealing with domestic abuse. Crucially, we spent time with women who were living in the shelters as well as women who had left, getting to know them and immersing ourselves in their daily lives. The screenplay was shaped by an amalgamation of the women's stories, which became the backstories of the characters in the film. Our mission to be emotionally true.

We knew early on that we absolutely wanted *BREATHING UNDERWATER* to be rooted as much as possible in true experiences and emotions, so the cast would ultimately be a mix of professional and non-professional actors. I was no stranger to this constellation, regularly directing actors and non-actors in my previous films.



The first to join the cast was Esperanza Martin González-Quevedo, who we met during our research phase. She had little acting experience, but there was something special in her. We invited her to audition and we were absolutely blown away. Having experienced abuse and lived in a shelter, she had an authentic depth of emotion to draw upon, but also the ability to channel it.

We had a long casting process for the role of Sascha, when we found a young and talented newcomer and (at the time) theatre student, Alessia Raschellà. She set herself apart from everyone else with her fiery spirit, dedication and quick, keen intelligence.

We felt Véro Tshanda Beya's powerful presence in Félicité (Alain Gomis) but we were amazed when she brought the wounded soul of Khadij that we had written on the page, to life. Her nuanced performance brought gravity and light to the scenes.

Finally, Emma is played by the magnificent Carla Juri. I was honored and incredibly lucky to have been able to collaborate with her. Her immense talent and deep empathy brought a rare, delicate sensitivity and spontaneity to this complex role, while blending seamlessly with the rest of the cast.

Aside from the four main characters, shelter director Tania and Emma's husband Marc were played by seasoned Luxembourgish actors Sascha Ley and Luc Schiltz respectively. They understood the weight of the subject and delivered outstanding performances in their supporting roles.

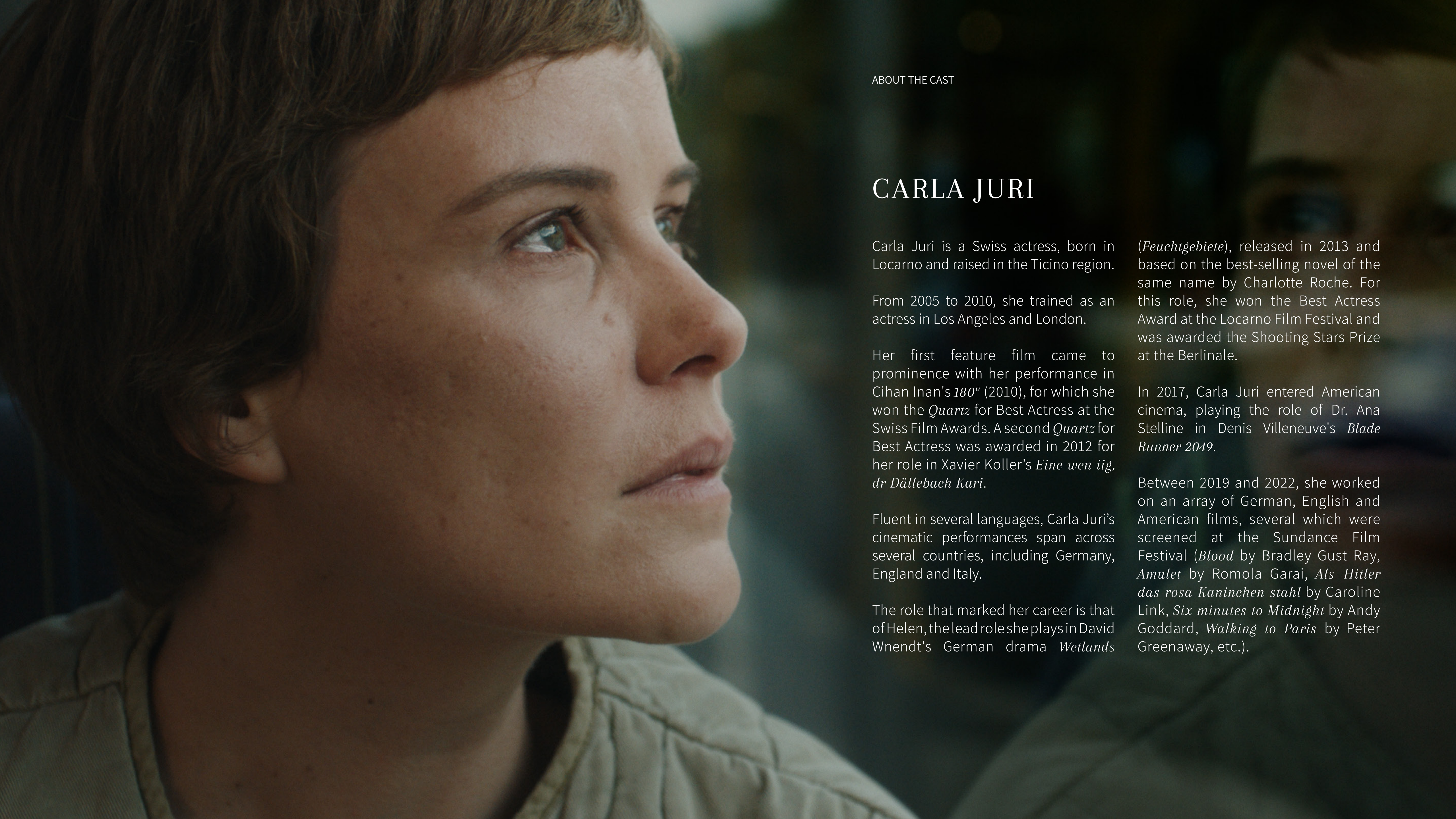
Rae Lyn Lee and I collaborated closely throughout with the entire film team to create a visual aesthetic that we candidly describe as “the light in absolute spite of the darkness”.

BREATHING UNDERWATER is a film of dualities. There is suffering, pain and violence, but there is also strength, joy and hope. It is above all, a hopeful film. The journey of Emma, Khadij, Sascha and Esperanza represents merely the first few hundred meters of the marathon women in situations of domestic abuse have to run towards rebuilding their lives.

We hope that this film will touch hearts, change lives and engage audiences in an open dialogue and debate.







ABOUT THE CAST

CARLA JURI

Carla Juri is a Swiss actress, born in Locarno and raised in the Ticino region.

From 2005 to 2010, she trained as an actress in Los Angeles and London.

Her first feature film came to prominence with her performance in Cihan Inan's *180°* (2010), for which she won the *Quartz* for Best Actress at the Swiss Film Awards. A second *Quartz* for Best Actress was awarded in 2012 for her role in Xavier Koller's *Eine wen iig, dr Dällebach Kari*.

Fluent in several languages, Carla Juri's cinematic performances span across several countries, including Germany, England and Italy.

The role that marked her career is that of Helen, the lead role she plays in David Wnendt's German drama *Wetlands*

(*Feuchtgebiete*), released in 2013 and based on the best-selling novel of the same name by Charlotte Roche. For this role, she won the Best Actress Award at the Locarno Film Festival and was awarded the Shooting Stars Prize at the Berlinale.

In 2017, Carla Juri entered American cinema, playing the role of Dr. Ana Stelline in Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049*.

Between 2019 and 2022, she worked on an array of German, English and American films, several which were screened at the Sundance Film Festival (*Blood* by Bradley Gust Ray, *Amulet* by Romola Garai, *Als Hitler das rosa Kaninchen stahl* by Caroline Link, *Six minutes to Midnight* by Andy Goddard, *Walking to Paris* by Peter Greenaway, etc.).



ABOUT THE CAST

VÉRONIQUE TSHANDA BEYA

Véronique Tshanda Beya, born Véro Tshanda Beya Mputu in Kinshasa, is a Congolese actress.

After studying business and marketing in her homeland and going through a rather difficult period in her family and private life, she worked at a number of odd jobs, including selling clothes on the streets of Kinshasa.

Following an audition she took part in somewhat by chance, she was chosen by Alain Gomis for the lead role in his film *Félicité*.

The film received international acclaim, winning the Grand Jury Prize at the Berlinale in 2017 and the Étalon de

Yennenga at Fespaco (the pan-African film and TV festival), the equivalent of the Grand Prix, Africa's most prestigious and high-profile award.

Véronique Tshanda Beya's performance is also particularly noteworthy, earning her several awards and distinctions, including the acting prize at the Journées cinématographiques de Carthage (2017), an Africa Movie Academy Awards for Best Actress in 2017, and the prize for Best Actress at the 6th edition of the Trophées francophones du cinéma.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a light purple cardigan over a grey sweater, is smiling warmly in a kitchen. She is holding a red and white checkered cloth. In the foreground, the back of a man's head and shoulder are visible, looking towards her. The kitchen has light-colored wooden cabinets and a backsplash of green and white geometric tiles. A white paper towel holder is visible on the left.

ABOUT THE CAST

ESPERANZA MARTIN GONZÁLEZ-QUEVEDO

Growing up in Spain, Esperanza Martin González-Quevedo practised dance and spent two years with an alternative theater company called *Sala Triángulo* in Madrid.

As an adult, she moved to Luxembourg and, after a long hiatus, she rekindled her love for the performing arts with the Spanish community theater company *Aglaya teatro Luxembourg*.

An amateur actress, she made her film debut in Eric Lamhène *Sola* (2021).

Following this short film, she was invited to join the main cast of Eric Lamhène's first feature film, *Breathing Underwater*.



ABOUT THE CAST

ALESSIA RASCHELLA

Alessia Raschella made her acting debut at the age of 14 in Luxembourg. The polygot actress studied the art of performance on the theatrical stage.

At the age of 21, she made a significant move to Paris to pursue the craft of film acting.

Her cinematic debut was in Eric Lamhène's feature film *Breathing Underwater*, in which she played an integral role, evolving alongside the main character. Alessia has transitioned seamlessly into cinema, taking on smaller but impactful parts, marking the exciting inception of her promising career in the film industry.



ABOUT THE CAST

SASCHA LEY

Multidisciplinary artist Sascha Ley is a singer, improviser, actress, poet and performer who explores stylistic boundaries at the intersections of jazz, free improvisation, imaginary folklore, classical and new music, creating a unique blend of improvisation and composition.


Based in Luxembourg, she performs internationally as a soloist, with her own duo, in quartet, and as a guest in a wide variety of ensembles between jazz and contemporary music.

In addition to music, she is also active as an actress, performer and occasional director, and is involved in the performing and visual arts.

She acquired her multidisciplinary training across various cities, including Amsterdam, Luxembourg, Saarbrücken, and Mumbai, India.

In the 90s, she began performing in Luxembourg productions and co-productions.

In 2005, at the Berlinale, she received the *Studio Hamburg European Shooting Star* award for Luxembourg.



ABOUT THE CAST

LUC SCHILTZ

Luc Schiltz is a Luxembourgish film and theatre actor. He is known to Luxembourgish and international audiences for his leading role in the series *Capitani* (Seasons 1 and 2), broadcast on Netflix and RTL.

Trained at the Conservatoire Royal de Liège (Belgium), he has played a succession of roles in theater and film, between Luxembourg and Brussels.

He has also appeared in a number of French and international productions, including Yann Samuell's *La Guerre des lulus*, Ruth Olshan's *Himbeeren mit Senf*, Jacob Berger's *Cellule de Crise* (series), Jaco Van Dormael's *Le tout nouveau testament* and Thomas de Thier's *Le goût des myrtilles*.

His roles in the Luxembourg productions *Capitani* and *Eng Nei Zäit* both won Filmpräis for Best Actor (Luxembourgish Film Academy Awards), with the latter also nominated for the Trophée franco-phone for best actor.





ERIC LAMHÈNE

CO-WRITER / DIRECTOR

Eric Lamhène is a writer/director based in Luxembourg. He earned his Master of Arts with distinction at the London Film School in 2010.

He has since written and directed several short films as well as various episodes of the television series *Comeback* and the documentary series *Routwäissgro* for RTL television. He is a writer on the Netflix crime series *Capitani*.

His fiction films and documentaries decidedly revolve around social topics and, as a director, he is drawn to the raw energy of non-actors in main roles. He has recently finished his debut feature film *Breathing Underwater* and is the creator of an upcoming neo-noir limited fiction series *The Darkness*, which is in its writing/development stage.

RAE LYN LEE

CO-WRITER / DIRECTOR
OF PHOTOGRAPHY

A childhood fascination that began with art and poetry led Rae Lyn Lee into the world of story and imagery. Born and raised in Singapore, she began her career as a stills photographer, directing and shooting images for fashion magazines and commercial clients. Despite her growing success, her love for the moving image took her to London to learn the craft of filmmaking at the London Film School. In 2010, she earned her Masters degree in Filmmaking, with a Distinction in her major, Cinematography. Currently based in Luxembourg, Rae Lyn has been working on film sets in Europe and Asia and expanding into Directing and Screenwriting.

She finished her first feature length fiction film *Breathing Underwater*, which she co-authored and lensed as Director of Photography. She is currently writing her second feature-length screenplay titled *Coming Together*, a bittersweet comedy about middle-aged sexuality.



CLAUDE WARINGO

PRODUCER



Claude Waringo graduated from INSAS. In 1986, he co-founded Samsa Film.

He has produced or co-produced more than 50 films with Luxembourg, French, Belgian directors... Most recently, he produced *Läif a Séil* (aka *The Last Ashes*), Luxembourg's first western as well as both seasons of the crime

series *Capitani*, a huge public success both on RTL and on NETFLIX (top ten in more than 40 countries). He is also producer of *Superjhem্প retörns*, number 1 film at the national box office in 2018. Currently, he is producing two new TV series for RTL, *Marginal* and *Am déiwen Däischteren* (aka *The Darkness*) and is preparing the release of *Hors d'haleine* (aka *Breathing Underwater*), a feature film by Eric Lamhène.

He is at the origin of the creation of the ULPA, Union Luxembourgeoise des Producteurs Audiovisuels (Luxembourg's producers' Guild) and he is its treasurer. He is a member of the European Film Academy and a member of the Académie des Césars. In 2012, he founded, with all the professional associations, the Filmakademie and became its first president. He is a director of Artémis Productions, shareholder of the production company Liaison Cinématographique in Paris, director of Filmland (filming studios).

He is also the instigator and coach of the BTS cinema and audiovisual which has been operating since the start of the 2014 school year. Since 2013 he has been a reader, first for the SSA then for the OFC in Switzerland.

With his partners Jani Thiltges and Bernard Michaux, he today manages Samsa Film, which is, by its size and the number of its productions, the leading production company in Luxembourg and which continues to premiere its films in the biggest festivals with notably 4 official selections in two years (2021 and 2022) at the Cannes festival.





TECHNICAL DETAILS

GENRE

Drama

LANGUAGE

**French (main),
Luxemburgish, Spanish,
Italian**

SUBTITLES

English

DURATION

101 minutes

FORMAT

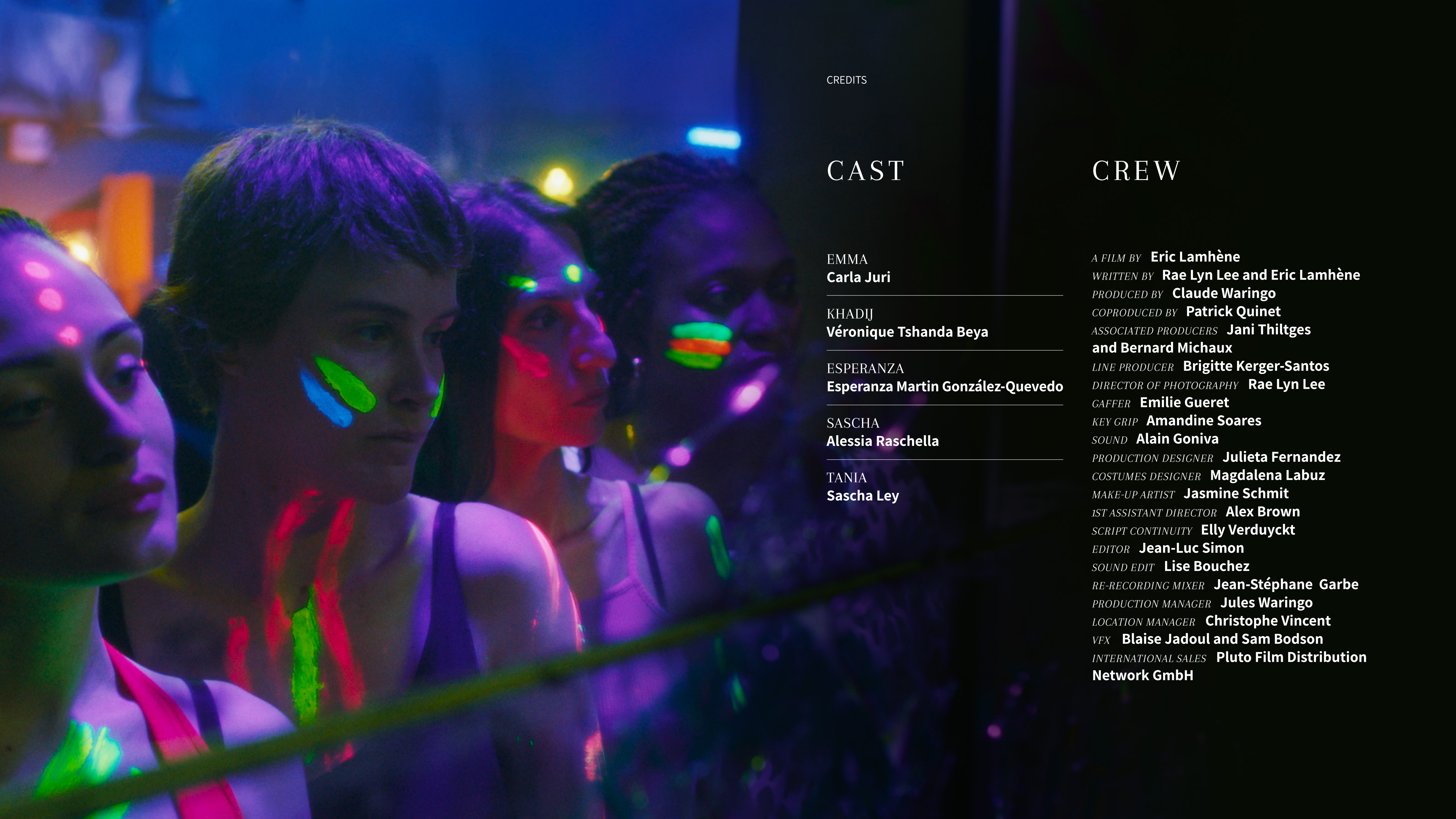
**DCP 2K | Color | 2:39:1 |
Dolby 5.1.**

PRODUCTION COUNTRIES

Luxembourg, Belgium

SHOOTING LOCATION

Luxembourg



CREDITS

CAST

- EMMA

Carla Juri
- KHADIJ

Véronique Tshanda Beya
- ESPERANZA

Esperanza Martin González-Quevedo
- SASCHA

Alessia Raschella
- TANIA

Sascha Ley

CREW

- A FILM BY* **Eric Lamhène**
- WRITTEN BY* **Rae Lyn Lee and Eric Lamhène**
- PRODUCED BY* **Claude Waringo**
- COPRODUCED BY* **Patrick Quinet**
- ASSOCIATED PRODUCERS* **Jani Thiltges and Bernard Michaux**
- LINE PRODUCER* **Brigitte Kerger-Santos**
- DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY* **Rae Lyn Lee**
- GAFFER* **Emilie Gueret**
- KEY GRIP* **Amandine Soares**
- SOUND* **Alain Goniva**
- PRODUCTION DESIGNER* **Julieta Fernandez**
- COSTUMES DESIGNER* **Magdalena Labuz**
- MAKE-UP ARTIST* **Jasmine Schmit**
- 1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR* **Alex Brown**
- SCRIPT CONTINUITY* **Elly Verduyckt**
- EDITOR* **Jean-Luc Simon**
- SOUND EDIT* **Lise Bouchez**
- RE-RECORDING MIXER* **Jean-Stéphane Garbe**
- PRODUCTION MANAGER* **Jules Waringo**
- LOCATION MANAGER* **Christophe Vincent**
- VFX* **Blaise Jadoul and Sam Bodson**
- INTERNATIONAL SALES* **Pluto Film Distribution Network GmbH**

CONTACT



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A Samsa Film production.
Coproduced by
Artémis Productions
with the support of
Film Fund Luxembourg.
In coproduction with Shelter Prod
with the support of Taxshelter.be
and ING and the Tax Shelter
du Gouvernement fédéral de
Belgique.

