











FESTIVAL DE CANNES COMPETITION 2019 OFFICIAL SELECTION

# VIRGINIE EFIRA ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS GASPARD ULLIEL

# SIBYL

#### A FILM BY JUSTINE TRIET

#### SANDRA HÜLLER LAURE CALAMY NIELS SCHNEIDER PAUL HAMY ARTHUR HARARI

1h41 - France, Belgium - 2019 - Scope - 5.1

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# **SYNOPSIS**

A sly, sultry character study from filmmaker Justine Triet, SIBYL follows a psychotherapist (Virginie Efira) who decides to quit her practice and return to writing instead. As Sibyl starts dropping patients, she begins to struggle with excess time and a lack of inspiration-until she gets a call from Margot (Adèle Exarchopoulos), a young actress wrapped up in a dramatic affair with her costar, Igor (Gaspard Ulliel), who happens to be married to the film's director (Sandra Hüller). Becoming further enmeshed in Margot's life, Sibyl starts to blur past and present, fiction with reality, and the personal with the professional as she begins to use Margot's life as source material for her novel.

## INTERVIEW WITH JUSTINE TRIET

# Like AGE OF PANIC and IN BED WITH VICTORIA, SIBYL is the portrait of a woman struggling to balance her professional and personal life, grappling with her emotions and anxieties. Are your films always a form of veiled self-portraiture?

I take inspiration from certain things happening within my inner circle, from research, from films, and no doubt a little bit from myself, but honestly, I'm not Sibyl. My cowriter Arthur Harari and I really had fun going deep into fiction, deliberately damaging our characters. I get the impression that in the end, they no longer resemble me at all.

Woody Allen's film ANOTHER WOMAN haunted me from the moment I started writing. Oddly I don't love that film, but its main narrative fascinates me: a woman seeking calm and inspiration is confronted with another woman, who plunges her into a dizzying abyss that makes her life break apart. That film was my initial reference.

#### Did you do any research on psychanalysis?

No. I did meet a number of shrinks and asked them if they'd ever had an unsettling experience with a patient. One of them confessed that she'd gone through her father's grave illness at the same time as one of her patients was going through it. Her own father died sooner than the patient's did, and she had to end the analysis because she felt extremely brutalized by the patient. That nourished the script, as did the television series IN TREATMENT.

# The film explores a number of motifs: motherhood, filiation, creativity, couples, passionate love, the mid-life crisis, duality, how neuroses are passed down... What is the dominant, central theme?

It's how we handle the question of our origins. How we find ways to forget them, and how they suddenly reappear. It's a film about identity, roots. Where do I come from, who am I, what have I done, can I reinvent myself? Sibyl is haunted by the origins of her child, her book, and Margot.

It was important to me that Margot come from a modest background. She hates her origins and is fighting against them. She appears out of nowhere with a dilemma that sends Sibyl careening into her own past. In a certain sense, she is Sibyl in a reverse mirror. Sibyl is also attempting to work against her origins - her mother, alcohol - as she builds her life. Writing is her way of escaping them as she reinvents herself.

As she begins writing again after meeting Margot, Sibyl opens a Pandora's box that leads her into both fictional folly and a vertiginous identity crisis.

# This leads us to the question of immorality. Sibyl transgresses the code of ethics when she records her patient for use in her future book. The film also features a filmmaker who models her actors like clay. Does the creative act always require some form of vampirism or predation?

To an extent, yes. But beyond that, in the film, everyone is manipulating everyone. In Sibyl's case, her need to write prompts her to break all the rules. She leaves reality and enters fiction in order to experience certain things. At the same time, it's playful. Creation is like a game with no rules. Of course Sibyl goes too far, because her life had gotten bland. She gets carried away. The writing and the book turn her into a locomotive that runs off the rails no sooner than it starts chugging. She feeds not only on Margot but on everything and everyone around her... including herself!

#### The film within the film reflects the game you refer to, playfully combining comedy and cruelty.

By this point in the film we need that blend, because this is when things really start going off the rails. When Sibyl goes to the island, she's entering a world of fantasy, no longer entirely real or normal. It's far away, it's beautiful, it's fake. The shoot was perfect for that. I needed it to bring the comedy and the insanity, two elements that shouldn't necessarily mix.

Sandra Hüller really helped me combine those elements. She achieves a perfect blend of comedy and drama as she embodies her explosive character, turning her pain into a nutty energy. We don't know whether to laugh or to suffer right along with her.

# At one point on the shoot, Margot says the movie business is crazy and she's afraid she'll lose her mind. Do you sometimes worry about that yourself?

The movie business is a microcosmic society where life speeds up and intensifies. Everything takes on monumental proportions. The tiniest problem becomes a tragedy. The hierarchy is brutal and completely grotesque. It's a ridiculous, comical milieu, but when you're living in it, experiences are heightened. I enjoyed making fun of it, and it served the story. It almost begs to be satirized. Altman's THE PLAYER was a reference in that regard. Even in a serious film, like Minnelli's TWO WEEKS IN ANOTHER TOWN, everything that has to do with the film biz has a comical, satirical side.

# There's a duality between Sibyl and Margot, Sibyl and her sister, Gabriel and the little girl born of his love with Sibyl... Can you talk about this motif, that runs through so many films?

There is also a duality between Sibyl and Mika, Gabriel and Igor... Between Sibyl and Margot, it's more of a reverse mirror. Sibyl kept her child; Margot wants to abort. As for Mika, she wanted a child, like Sibyl, but didn't have one and is mourning that. I tried to multiply the duality motif, as though Sibyl were penetrating all the film's characters. Towards the end Margot escapes that and we realize she may be less fragile than Sibyl. The stronger one may not be who we think. Margot has blossomed and matured. She's no longer a victim and seems happy and proud at having inspired Sibyl.

#### In terms of mirror images, the presence of the children is striking. What role do they play in the story?

The children are very important, but they are sort of hidden characters in the film. The child in psychanalysis, Daniel, is a strange presence, not necessary to the story, but always there when Sibyl remembers her past love. Daniel is like a ghost of the child she made with Gabriel. In the beginning, when Daniel and Sibyl are playing Monopoly, he tells her "you're going to lose." This is a foreshadowing of what is to come. When I wrote the script, I was told there were too many characters, that I wasn't making a series, that Daniel wasn't necessary. I felt, on the contrary, that he reflected a key element of the main story. To me, he is covertly

a very important character. As for Sibyl's daughters, initially they're in the background, but gradually Selma comes into focus and we understand that she is the secret core of Sibyl's life.

She inherits it all, without knowing it. She is both a trace and a prolongation. The film needed to end on her. She speaks her own mind and truly sees her mother for the first time, hence beginning to exist just when Sibyl has decided to pretend her life is fiction and that the people around her are characters. The child unknowingly comes along and contradicts her mother.

# After a very urban first part (as in your first two films), SIBYL heads for the light and the wide open spaces of Stromboli. Why this place, so loaded with symbolism and cinema?

The island's history has been transformed by cinema. Shooting there was somewhat of a mystical experience, and beyond the reference, the volcano evokes all the emotional and sexual metaphors. Though SIBYL is in no way a rereading of Rossellini's legendary film, we had fun filming a German director imagining herself shooting a love story on Stromboli. The idea was to use the location to make the film erupt. It was the first time I'd ever shot in a natural landscape and I loved it! (I have one thing in common with Sibyl, I spend more time in fiction than in reality, and filming elements like the sea, the wind and the sun was a new challenge.) Stromboli provides such a contrast to the Parisian apartments that it seems almost unreal. Sibyl calls her sister from the island and tells her she feels she's no longer in any reality, which is ironic, because this is where she is the most proactive, where she really dives into life.

# The film is bursting with characters, stories inside stories... How do you kick off such complexity? Did you and Arthur Harari set challenges for yourselves when writing the script? Or were you seeking to expand upon the vein of VICTORIA? VICTORIA was fairly complex in terms of interconnecting stories, but it was quite down-to-earth, whereas here there's a more cerebral dimension: we're in Sibyl's head.

Challenges have nothing to do with it. We explore a lead, and for this film, that immediately implied complexity and overlap, because there are multiple levels of reality: the present, Margot's story, Sibyl's past, the writing of the novel. It was complicated to organize because I don't do much theorizing. I need a kind of chaotic accumulation that I then make sense of, taking things out, clarifying. That continued in the editing, where we had to once again ask questions, break it all down and reorganize it. At that point, the editor Laurent Sénéchal and I had to decide how all these elements might add up to a particular tone: straight-up comedy, drama, or a mix. I realized that we shouldn't systematically aim for comic efficiency, that it wouldn't work with this film. It's a drama, or maybe a dramedy. A film like James L. Brooks' TERMS OF ENDEARMENT is a great example of that. Genre goes out the window, it's a hybrid.

#### How did you approach the love scenes, which are relatively explicit?

It was new for me and I tried to film them like action scenes. I asked myself, should I approach it with a fear of lowering the camera, or should I see it as a mechanical thing? We directed these scenes with mechanical precision, especially since Virginie had no desire to improvise. She asked me to tell her exactly what I wanted her to do. It was pretty comical. I spoke to them as if teaching them to ride a bike or rebuild an engine. It was concrete.

# This is your second film with Virginie Efira. VICTORIA was a career milestone for her, and it seems like you two are starting to form a cinematic bond.

With this film, I felt I was discovering new faces of Virginie. She understands everything I'm looking for, we worked quickly. The ice was broken, I could ask her anything and she trusted me. She abandoned herself completely. And she doesn't limit herself to the primary logic of the script. She's prepared to explore all facets of her character down to the illogical contradictions. I took an almost physical pleasure in filming her, molding her like clay. I wanted to rough her up, but in a good way: see her cry, fall apart, stumble and get up.

#### Did you choose Adèle Exarchopoulos based on her work in BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR?

Not at all! Though I loved her in that film, I wasn't thinking of her when I wrote the script, I had an older actress in mind. She came to the project later on. She auditioned and was amazing. Adèle has an incredible power, a rare grace. You look at her. The role is tricky because it could be played just technically (fall apart, cry, panic, etc.). But Adèle never relies on technique, she actually puts herself in the emotional state the scene requires, and that's how she becomes the character.

#### Did you get the idea to cast Sandra Hüller after seeing TONI ERDMANN?

Of course! But I actually met her 10 years ago at a festival, and she really struck me before I'd even seen her work. She has a rare intelligence, and she's also a theater actress in Germany. To say she works a lot is an understatement! You feel she can do absolutely anything, and every time it's incredibly fleshed out and original. She brings a lot of burlesque, but always mixed with seriousness. She really impresses me.

# The ending is beautiful, highly ambiguous and very open, at once happy and unhappy... As Sibyl gazes at her daughter, we think of Truffaut's words in another context, "Looking at you brings both joy and pain." Joy at seeing her daughter, pain because she is reminded of Gabriel.

Yes, that's right. The end of the film is impure. We can read in liberation or appeasement, but the wound has not healed. Sibyl doesn't show her daughter her tears, and we feel the child is a bit lost, wondering not only where she comes from but also who her mother really is. We don't know who she is either. Her life is brimming with lies. But they are not malevolent, they are arrangements with reality, loving lies. To keep love in her life, she lies.

## JUSTINE TRIET, DIRECTOR

Justine Triet is a graduate of the Ecole Nationale Superieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Her first films question the place of the individual within the group. SUR PLACE (2007) was shot during the student demonstrations and SOLFÉRINO (2008) during the presidential elections. In 2009, she directed DES OMBRES DANS LA MAISON in a township of Saõ Paulo. Her first fiction short, VILAINE FILLE, MAUVAIS GARÇON (TWO SHIPS), won a number of prizes at French and international festivals (European Film Award, Berlinale 2012; Grand Prix, Angers First Look; Grand Prix, Belfort; preselection for best short, 2013 Césars). Her debut feature LA BATAILLE DE SOLFÉRINO (AGE OF PANIC) was selected for ACID in Cannes 2013 and nominated for a 2014 César in the Best First Film category. VICTORIA, her second feature, opened the Critics' Week in Cannes in 2016. Starring Virginie Efira, the film was nominated for five Césars, including Best Film and Best Actress.

#### FILMOGRAPHY

- 2019 SIBYL
- 2016 IN BED WITH VICTORIA (VICTORIA)
- 2013 AGE OF PANIC (LA BATAILLE DE SOLFÉRINO)
- 2011 TWO SHIPS (VILAINE FILLE, MAUVAIS GARCON) (medium-length film)
- 2010 DES OMBRES DANS LA MAISON (documentary)
- 2009 SOLFÉRINO (documentary)
- 2007 SUR PLACE (short film)

#### **VIRGINIE EFIRA**

2019 **SIBYL** by Justine Triet **POLICE** by Anne Fontaine **KEEP GOING (CONTINUER)** by Joachim Lafosse **BENEDETTA** by Paul Verhoeven AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE (UN AMOUR IMPOSSIBLE) by Catherine Corsini 2018 SINK OR SWIM (LE GRAND BAIN) by Gilles Lellouche NOT ON MY WATCH (PRIS DE COURT) by Emmanuelle Cuau 2017 2016 ET TA SŒUR by Marion Vernoux IN BED WITH VICTORIA (VICTORIA) by Justine Triet UP FOR LOVE (UN HOMME À LA HAUTEUR) by Laurent Tirard **ELLE** by Paul Verhoeven **CAPRICE** by Emmanuel Mouret 2015 THE SENSE OF WONDER (LE GOÛT DES MERVEILLES) by Eric Besnard **UNE FAMILLE A LOUER** by Jean-Pierre Améris **DEAD MAN TALKING** by Patrick Ridremont 2013 IT BOY (20 ANS D'ÉCART) by David Moreau LES INVINCIBLES by Frederic Berthe COOKIE by Léa Fazer TURNING TIDE (EN SOLITAIRE) by Christophe Offenstein SECOND CHANCE (LA CHANCE DE MA VIE) by Nicolas Cuche 2011 MY WORST NIGHTMARE (MON PIRE CAUCHEMAR) by Anne Fontaine KILL ME PLEASE by Olias Barco 2010 THE PERFECT DATE (L'AMOUR C'EST MIEUX À DEUX) by Dominique Farrugia & Arnaud Lemort THE WHISTLER (LE SIFFLEUR) by Philippe Lefebvre

# ADÈLE EXARCHOPOULOS

| 2019 | SIBYL by Justine Triet   |  |
|------|--|--|
|      | THE WHITE CROW by Ralph Fiennes  |  |
| 2018 | REVENIR by Jessica Palud   |  |
| 2017 | THE FAITHFUL (LE FIDÈLE) by Michaël R. Roskam  |  |
| 2016 | ORPHAN (ORPHELINE) by Arnaud des Pallières<br>THE LAST FACE by Sean Penn   |  |
|      | DOWN BY LOVE (EPERDUMENT) by Pierre Godeau   |  |
| 2015 | THE ANARCHISTS (LES ANARCHISTES) by Élie Wajeman   |  |
| 2014 | INSECURE (QUI VIVE) by Marianne Tardieu<br>THREE DAYS by Mikhaïl Kosyrev-Neterov   |  |
| 2013 | I USED TO BE DARKER by Matthew Porterfield<br>BLUE IS THE WARMEST COLOR (LA VIE D'ADÈLE - CHAPITRE 1 & 2) by Abdellatif Kechiche |  |
| 2012 | PIECES OF ME (DES MORCEAUX DE MOI) by Nolwenn Lemesle  |  |
| 2011 | GINO STORY (CHEZ GINO) by Samuel Benchetrit<br>CARRÉ BLANC by Jean- Baptiste Leonetti  |  |
| 2010 | TURK'S HEAD (TÊTE DE TURC) by Pascal Elbé  |  |
| 2009 | THE ROUND UP (LA RAFLE) by Rose Bosch  |  |
| 2008 | TROUBLE AT TIMPETILL (LES ENFANTS DE TIMPLEBACH) by Nicolas Bary   |  |
| 2007 | BOXES by Jane Birkin   |  |

#### **GASPARD ULLIEL**

- 2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet
- 2017 ONE NATION, ONE KING (UN PEUPLE ET SON ROI) by Pierre Schoeller 9 FINGERS (9 DOIGTS) by F.J Ossang TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD (LES CONFINS DU MONDE) by Guillaume Nicloux EVA by Benoît Jacquot
- 2016 IT'S ONLY THE END OF THE WORLD (JUSTE LA FIN DU MONDE) by Xavier Dolan THE DANCER (LA DANSEUSE) by Stéphanie Di Giusto
- 2014 **SAINT LAURENT** by Bertrand Bonello
- 2012 A GREEK TYPE OF PROBLEM (TU HONORERAS TA MÈRE ET TA MÈRE) by Brigitte Rouan
- 2011 **THE ART OF LOVE (L'ART D'AIMER)** by Emmanuel Mouret
- 2010 THE PRINCESS OF MONTPENSIER (LA PRINCESSE DE MONTPENSIER) by Bertrand Tavernier
- 2009 INSIDE RING (LE PREMIER CERCLE) by Laurent Tuel A HEAVENLY VINTAGE (VINTNERS'S LUCK) by Niki Caro ULTIMATUM by Alain Tasma
- 2008 THE SEA WALL (BARRAGE CONTRE LE PACIFIQUE) by Rithy Panh THE THIRD PART OF THE WORLD (LA TROSIEME PARTIE DU MONDE) by Éric Forestier
- 2007 HANNIBAL RISING by Peter Webber JACQUOU LE CROQUANT by Laurent Boutonnat
- 2006 PARIS, I LOVE YOU ("Le Marais") (PARIS JE T'AIME) by Gus Van Sant
- 2005 NINA'S HOUSE (LA MAISON DE NINA) by Richard Dembo
- 2004 THE LAST DAY (LE DERNIER JOUR) by Rodolphe Marconi A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT (UN LONG DIMANCHE DE FIANÇAILLES) by Jean-Pierre Jeunet STRAYED (LES ÉGARÉS) by André Téchiné
- 2002 SUMMER THINGS (EMBRASSEZ QUI VOUS VOUDREZ) by Michel Blanc
- 2001 L'OISEAU RARE by Didier Albert

## SANDRA HÜLLER

- 2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet
- 2018 IN THE AISLES (IN DEN GANGEN) by Thomas Stuber EXIL by Visar Morina
- 2017 FACK JU GÖHTE 3 by Bora Dagtekin
- 2016 TONI ERDMANN by Maren Ade
- 2014 AMOUR FOU by Jessica Hausner LOSE MYSELF (VERGISS MEIN ICH) by Jan Schomburg
- 2013 **FINSTERWORLD** by Frauke Finsterwalder
- 2011 ABOVE US ONLY SKY (UBER UNS DAS ALL) by Jan Schomburg 2010 BROWNIAN MOVEMENT by Nanouk Leopold 2009 HENRI IV by Jo Baier
- 2008 ANONYMA (EINE FRAU IN BERLIN) by Max Färberböck 2007 MADONNEN by Maria Speth
- 2006 **REQUIEM** by Hans-Christian Schmid

#### LAURE CALAMY

- 2019 **SIBYL** by Justine Triet SEULES LES BÊTES by Dominik Moll LOULOUTE by Hubert Viel QUEENS OF THE FIELD (LES FOOTEUSES) by Mohamed Hamidi LE DINDON by Jalil Lespert CLAIRE DARLING (LA DERNIÈRE FOLIE DE CLAIRE CARLING) 2018 by Julie Bertuccelli LADY J (MADEMOISELLE DE JONCQUIÈRES) by Emmanuel Mouret **OUR STRUGGLES (NOS BATAILLES)** by Guillaume Senez **ROULEZ JEUNESSE** by Julien Guetta TEMPS DE CHIEN ! by Edouard Deluc 2017 AVA by Léa Mysius KISS ME! (EMBRASSE MOI) by Océan and Cyprien Vial I GOT LIFE! (POUR LE RÉCONFORT) by Vincent Macaigne AURORE by Blandine Lenoir 2016 HAPPINESS ACADEMY (BONHEUR ACADÉMIE) by Alain Della Negra and Kaori Kinoshita **CLITOPRAXIS** by Emmanuel Laborie ELEMENTARY (PRIMAIRE) by Hélène Angel STAYING VERTICAL (RESTER VERTICAL) by Alain Guiraudie IN BED WITH VICTORIA (VICTORIA) by Justine Triet THIS SUMMER FEELING (CE SENTIMENT DE L'ÉTÉ) 2015 by Mikhaël Hers **IN HARMONY (EN ÉQUILIBRE)** by Denis Dercourt LES COWBOYS by Thomas Bidegain ALL ABOUT THEM (À TROIS ON Y VA) by Jérôme Bonnell
- 2014 FIDELIO, ALICE'S JOURNEY (FIDELIO, L'ODYSSÉE D'ALICE) by Lucie Borleteau FRENCH WOMEN (SOUS LES JUPES DES FILLES) by Audrey Dana WEEK-ENDS by Anne Villacèque ZOUZOU by Blandine Lenoir
  2013 BICYCLING WITH MOLIERE by Philippe Le Guay 9 MONTH STRETCH (9 MOIS FERME)
  - by Albert Dupontel
- 2012 A PERFECT PLAN (UN PLAN PARFAIT) by Pascal Chaumeil FAMILY MATTERS (LA FLEUR DE L'ÂGE) by Nick Quinn WHAT WE'LL LEAVE BEHIND (CE QU'IL RESTERA DE NOUS) by Vincent Macaigne A WORLD WITHOUT WOMEN (UN MONDE SANS FEMMES) by Guillaume Brac
- 2009 PARK BENCHES (BANCS PUBLICS (VERSAILLES RIVE DROITE)) by Bruno Podalydès

2015 - 2019 CALL MY AGENT

**TV SHOW** 

#### **NIELS SCHNEIDER**

- 2019 SIBYL by Justine Triet REVENIR by Jessica Palud SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL (SYMPATHIE POUR LE DIABLE) by Guillaume de Fontenay CURIOSA by Lou Jeunet
- 2018 AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE (UNE AMOUR IMPOSSIBLE) by Catherine Corsini THE BLACK BOOK (LE CAHIER NOIR) by Valeria Sarmiento ONE NATION, ONE KING (UN PEUPLE ET SON ROI) by Pierre Schoeller
- 2017 **DALIDA** by Lisa Azuelos
- 2016 POLINA (POLINA, DANSER SA VIE) by Valérie Müller & Angelin Preljocaj SLEEPING BEAUTY (BELLE DORMANT) by Adolfo Arrietta DARK DIAMOND (DIAMANT NOIR) by Arthur Harari KOKORO (LE COEUR RÉGULIER) by Vanja d'Alcantara
- 2014 **GEMMA BOVERY** by Anne Fontaine
- 2013 YOU AND THE NIGHT (LES AMANTS D'APRÈS MINUIT) by Yann Gonzalez
- 2011 ATOMIC AGE (L'AGE ATOMIQUE) by Helena Klotz
- 2010 HEARTBEATS (LES AMOURS IMAGINAIRES) by Xavier Dolan
- 2009 I KILLED MY MOTHER (J'AI TUÉ MA MÈRE) by Xavier Dolan

#### PAUL HAMY

- SIBYL by Justine Triet JESSICA FOREVER by Caroline Poggi and Jonathan Vinel FURIE by Olivier Abbou TERRITORY OF LOVE (L'AUTRE CONTINENT) by Romain Cogitore
  BACK TO BURGUNDY (CE QUI NOUS LIE) by Cédric Klapisch
- 2017 9 FINGERS (9 DOIGTS) by F-G. Ossang OCCIDENTAL by Neïl Beloufa STALIN'S COUCH (LE DIVAN DE STALINE) by Fanny Ardant THE ORNITHOLOGIST (O ORNITOLOGO) by João Pedro Rodrigues SEX DOLL by Sylvie Verheyde
- 2016 **PARISIENNE (PEUR DE RIEN)** by Danielle Arbid **DESPITE THE NIGHT (MALGRÉ LA NUIT)** by Philippe Grandrieux
- 2015 FRENCH BLOOD (UN FRANÇAIS) by Diastème MARYLAND by Alice Winocour MY KING by Maïwenn
- 2013 **ON MY WAY (ELLE S'EN VA)** by Emmanuelle Bercot **SUZANNE** by Katell Quillévéré

# CAST

| Sibyl   | Virginie Efira      |
|---------|---------------------|
| Margot  | Adèle Exarchopoulos |
| lgor    | Gaspard Ulliel      |
| Mika    | Sandra Hüller       |
| Edith   | Laure Calamy        |
| Gabriel | Niels Schneider     |
| Etienne | Paul Hamy           |
| Dr Katz | Arthur Harari       |

## CREW

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