



Karlovy Vary
International Film Festival
Crystal Globe Competition

A HAPPY FAMILY

A FILM BY JAN-ERIC MACK. PRODUCED BY C-FILMS

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Niki has two kids, two jobs, and no money. After a fire turns her life upside down, her children are placed in foster care. Banned from contact, she assumes a new identity risking everything to stay close to them.



DRAMA

120 minutes

MASTER Swiss German (EN, DE, IT & FR SUBs), Color, DCP

MAINCAST Anna Schinz, Julia Jentsch, Bettina Stucky,
Michael Neuenschwander, Martina Apostolova

DIRECTOR Jan-Eric Mack

WRITERS Anna Schinz, Nikita Afanasjev
Jan-Eric Mack, Eva Kienholz

DOP Yunus Roy Imer

PRODUCERS Martin Joss, Peter Reichenbach

PRODUCTION C-FILMS AG

WORLD SALES Bendita Film Sales

**SWISS
DISTRIBUTOR** DCM

STATUS completed

**WORLD
PREMIERE** Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 2026
Crystal Globe Competition



SYNOPSIS

NIKI (35) lives with her two children, LEONIE (9) and JIMMY (6), in a small apartment in Zurich. She works in an industrial laundry and takes on under-the-table work in a nightclub cloakroom to make ends meet. The constant struggle between financial survival and being a mother is overwhelming.

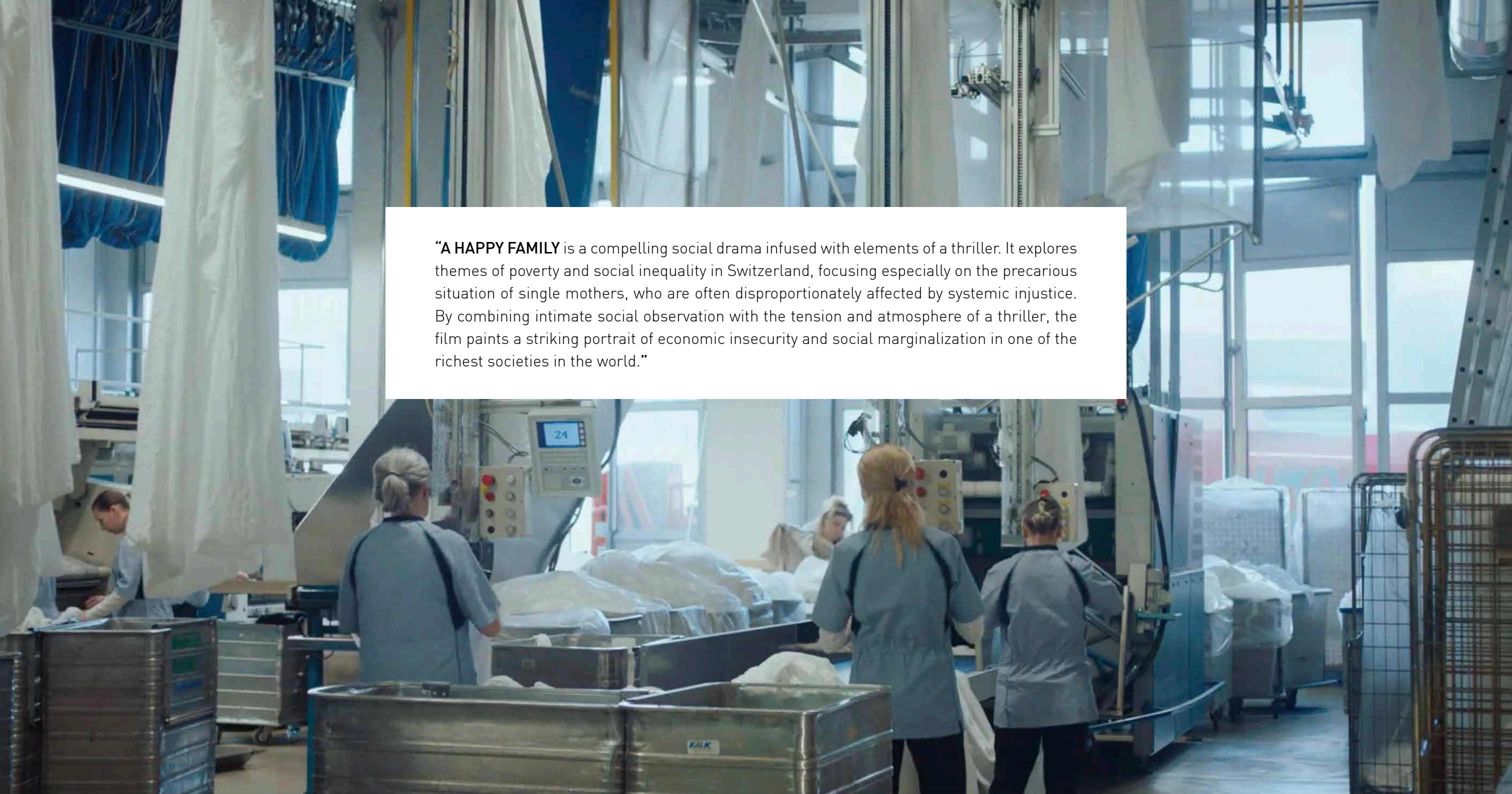
When Leonie and Jimmy accidentally start a kitchen fire while left unsupervised, the Child and Adult Protection Authority (KESB), represented by social worker MS. WEBER (50), makes the difficult decision to take the children away. They are placed with a foster family. Because Niki refuses to cooperate, a no-contact order is imposed.

After a long night out, Niki and her best friend MANU (34) break into the family agency's office and discover where her children have been placed: Raron, a small village in the canton of Valais. Niki heads there and finds out the local school is looking for a cleaner. She applies—under a false name and with dyed hair—and gets the job.

When the children recognize their mother, they can't believe their eyes. From that point on, the three begin a secret relationship, living double lives. Meanwhile, SABINE (45), their foster mother, tries to provide a stable environment for Leonie and Jimmy.

Niki pushes the deception even further by getting close to MATTHIAS (57), Sabine's brother-in-law – a local recluse and the church caretaker of Raron. Eventually, Niki even finds herself at the foster family's dinner table. But as she looks into the eyes of her overwhelmed children, the cracks in her disguise begin to show.

The authorities are closing in. As pressure mounts, Niki flees with her children. They manage to cross the border into Italy. But when a sudden incident with Jimmy shakes her, Niki realizes—at the very last moment—that in trying to escape, she may lose everything she loves.

A wide-angle shot of a hospital ward. In the foreground, several nurses in light blue scrubs are seen from behind, working at a long table. The ward is filled with hospital beds, some of which are occupied by patients. Medical equipment, including monitors and IV stands, is visible throughout the room. Large windows in the background let in natural light, and the overall atmosphere is clinical and busy.

“A HAPPY FAMILY is a compelling social drama infused with elements of a thriller. It explores themes of poverty and social inequality in Switzerland, focusing especially on the precarious situation of single mothers, who are often disproportionately affected by systemic injustice. By combining intimate social observation with the tension and atmosphere of a thriller, the film paints a striking portrait of economic insecurity and social marginalization in one of the richest societies in the world.”



ANNA SCHINZ
as NIKI



JULIA JENTSCH
as SABINE



BETTINA STUCKY
as MISS WEBER



MICHAEL NEUENSCHWANDER
as MATTHIAS



MARTINA APOSTOLOWA
as VERA



ALIREZA BAYRAM
as MANU

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

A HAPPY FAMILY portrays a single mother of two who, despite full-time work, lives below the poverty line on the outskirts of Zurich. She belongs to the so-called “working poor” — people who work hard yet remain trapped in poverty. In Switzerland, this reality often stays invisible, hidden behind closed doors. The film explores how systemic inequality and gender roles collide: most of those affected are women, struggling to balance motherhood and survival in a society that treats family as a private matter. Rising living costs and social fragmentation deepen their vulnerability. Our story reflects this fragile balance — between personal responsibility and structural injustice, failure and resilience. Without moral judgment, **A HAPPY FAMILY** invites empathy for those who fall through the cracks of a system meant to protect them.

According to prevailing societal stereotypes, someone living in poverty in Switzerland is expected to be physically or mentally ill, addicted to drugs, or alcoholic. In this perspective, poverty is seen as an issue affecting only those excluded from the workforce. All the more surprising is the fact that being employed and living in poverty are not mutually exclusive—even in affluent Switzerland. A significant proportion of those living below the poverty line are single mothers. They must perform a near-impossible balancing act between childcare and earning a living—financially, logistically, and emotionally. And too often, it's the children who suffer most.

We held numerous discussions, both with people affected by poverty and with representatives of relevant public institutions, foster care organizations, SOS foster mothers, the City of Zurich's School Psychology Service, and Caritas Switzerland. Through this research, it became clear that Swiss social policy plays a significant role in

perpetuating these problems. In Switzerland, having children – or starting a family – is traditionally seen as a private matter. Accordingly, public financial support is minimal, whether in the form of family allowances, childcare services, or access to subsidized housing. Due to Switzerland's federal system, the institutional landscape is fragmented. Agencies operate differently depending on the canton and often pursue their own agendas.

Compared to other European countries, Switzerland ranks near the bottom in terms of state support for families. Women in particular face major disadvantages when reentering the workforce – especially if they are raising children on their own. Against this backdrop, our main character Niki can be seen as a victim of systemic inequality.

Niki and her children are at the heart of our story. We experience our main character as deeply ambivalent – she acts both as a victim and a perpetrator. Her actions are often impulsive, at times careless in moments of overwhelm, but never malicious. It is important to us that the audience experiences her in all her complexity.

Not only Niki, but others too seem trapped in a system where, at times, the individual gets lost within the rules. Help and dependency often lie dangerously close together. While the film raises socially critical questions, our interest is not in dramatization, but rather in a humanistic perspective. Humor plays a central role in this: it opens the door to difficult topics and invites empathy for all characters, regardless of their actions.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

According to Caritas Switzerland, nearly 1.34 million people are currently at risk of poverty; over half of them already live below the poverty line. As of 2024, 709,000 people are living in working-poor households.

Gender equality is a key factor within the demographic known as the “working poor,” as it predominantly affects single mothers. A HAPPY FAMILY explores this complex socio-political issue, which has gained significant relevance in recent years. The energy crisis and rising cost of living are now increasingly impacting families from the middle class as well.

The question of how far the state can—or should—intervene in parenting is highly complex. Our story offers a contemporary look at the life of a young woman who, for a variety of reasons, is unable to reconcile motherhood

with full-time employment. It is important to us to show how personal overwhelm intersects with the structural disadvantages faced by single mothers and with rigid societal role expectations.

Responsibility for our protagonist's situation cannot—and should not—be assigned to a single cause. She is structurally disadvantaged, yet she is not merely a victim; she also contributes to her own struggle. Within this tension, the story reflects the nuanced complexity of the subject. At the same time, we are careful not to oversimplify the difficult role of the authorities. We do not wish to reduce them to antagonists in a populist or one-dimensional manner.

Jan-Eric Mack



JAN-ERIC MACK

DIRECTOR



Selected Filmography

2024	A Happy Family	Feature film, C-Films (in distribution)
	Courage (WT)	Feature film, Zodiac Pictures (in development)
2023	Under the ice	Series, C-Films & Streamer (in development)
	Zivilisten	Series, Iconoclast Berlin (in development)
	Davos 1917	Series, Contrastfilm & Letterbox (co-director)
2021	Wilder, 3. Staffel	Series, C-Films, Panimage, SRF
2018	Wilder, 2. Staffel	Series, C-Films, Panimage, SRF (co-director)
2017	Facing Mecca	Short fiction film, Dschoint Ventschr
2016	Peripherie	Feature film, episode Sonam, ZHdK
2015	King	Short fiction film, SRF & ZHdK
2014	Wandelzeit	Short documentary
2013	Alfonso	Short fiction film, ZHdK
2011	Magnetfelder	Short fiction film, ZHdK
2010	Ronaldo	Short fiction film, ZHdK

Jan-Eric Mack was born in Trüllikon in 1983. He completed an apprenticeship as a graphic designer. He then worked for various design studios in Zurich. In 2009, he transferred to the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) to study feature film directing.

During his studies, he has already directed several award-winning short films. His Master's thesis film, FACING MECCA, won the Student Oscar in 2017, the Swiss Film Award in 2018, and was shortlisted for the 90th Academy Awards (Oscars) in the "Live Action Shorts" category.

In 2020, he directed the third season of the hit series WILDER for Swiss television. He then co-directed the historical spy series DAVOS 1917. The international co-production celebrated its world premiere at the 19th Zurich Film Festival and aired on SRF, ARD, and ORF at Christmas 2023. His first feature film, A HAPPY FAMILY, will be released in Swiss theaters in the January of 2027.

Selected Awards

- 17e Lex Arcs Film Festival, Work in Progress. Prix 22D for A HAPPY FAMILY, 2025
- Prix Swissperform, Best lead role for Dominique Devenport in DAVOS 1917 | 2024
- Prix Swissperform, Best lead role for Sarah Spale in Wilder | 2021
- Swiss Film Award, Best short film for Facing Mecca 2018
- 90th Academy Awards®, Shortlist for Facing Mecca 2018
- 44th Student Academy Awards®, Silver for Facing Mecca 2017
- Palm Springs ShortFest, Best of Festival Award for Facing Mecca 2017
- 20th Ismailia Film Festival, Jury Award for Facing Mecca 2018
- First Steps Awards, Nomination for Facing Mecca 2017
- Shortynale Kurzfilmfestival, AUT, Best short film for Alfonso, 2015
- Festival del Film Locarno, Premio Cinema e Gioventù for Alfonso 2013
- Zurich Film Prize Cadrage, Short film award for Wandelzeit 2014
- NIFFF Neuchatel, «Prix Taurus à l'innovation» for Magnetfelder, 2011

ANNA SCHINZ

Writer & Maincast



Selected Screenwriting Credits

2024	A Happy Family	Feature film (in distribution)
2023	Zivilisten	Series (in development)
2017	Facing Mecca	Short film

Selected Acting Credits

2026	A Happy Family	Feature Film, Jan-Eric Mack
	Eurotrash	Feature Film, Frauke Finsterwalder
2023	Davos 1917	Series
2021	Wilder, Staffel 3	Series
2019	Aus dem Schatten	Feature film
2018	Bestatter	TV-series
2017	Private Banking	TV two-part series
2016	Wilder, Staffel 1	Series
2016	Goliath	Cinema film
2015	Gotthard	TV two-part series
2014	Heidi	Cinema film

Anna Schinz was born in Zurich in 1987. After gaining her first experience in front of the camera and on stage, she studied acting at the Zurich University of the Arts, earning her master's degree in 2011. Even during her training, she appeared on stage at venues including the renowned Schauspielhaus Zürich and the Theater Kanton Zürich. Anna Schinz gained recognition among a wide audience through roles in successful productions such as DAVOS 1917, WILDER, GOTTHARD, HEIDI, and PRIVATE BANKING. For her performance in PRIVATE BANKING, she was awarded the Swiss Television Film Prize in 2018. In 2019, she took on the lead role in the television film AUS DEM SCHATTEN, directed by Marcel Gisler. In addition to her work in front of the camera, Anna Schinz is also a writer. Together with Jan-Eric Mack, she co-wrote the screenplay for the short film FACING MECCA, which has won numerous international awards, including the Swiss Film Award and the Student Academy Award. The film also made it onto the shortlist for the Academy Awards (Oscars). She continued her work as a screenwriter with the script for ZIVILISTEN. For the feature film A HAPPY FAMILY, she not only co-wrote the screenplay but also played the lead role.

Selected Awards

- 17e Lex Arcs Film Festival, Work in Progress. Prix 22D, for A HAPPY FAMILY, 2025
- Swiss Television Film Award, Best supporting role, for Private Banking 2018
- Emmie-und-Emil-Oprecht-Preis, Audition for the Artistic Director 2012
- Fritz-Gerber-Stiftung, Support Fund for Young Talented People 2011
- Friedl-Wald Stiftung, Acting scholarship 2012
- Migroskulturprozent, Acting Study Award 2009
- Swiss Film Award, Best short film, for Facing Mecca, 2018
- 20th Ismailia Film Festival Jury Award, for Facing Mecca, 2018
- 44th Student Academy Awards®, Silver, for Facing Mecca, 2017
- 90th Academy Awards® Shortlisted, for Facing Mecca, 2017
- Palm Springs Int. ShortFest, Best of Festival Award, for Facing Mecca, 2017
- First Steps Awards, Nomination, for Facing Mecca, 2017

YUNUS ROY IMER

DOP



Yunus Roy Imer is a highly awarded, internationally active cinematographer based in Berlin. His debut film SYSTEMSPRENGER (directed by Nora Fingscheidt) was honored with the Silver Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival and selected as Germany's Oscar submission. It won eight Lolas (German Film Awards) and was featured in the Cinematographer's Debut Competition at the Cameraimage Festival. For the documentary SPACE DOGS (directed by Elsa Kremser & Levin Peter), which premiered at Locarno and toured festivals worldwide, he received the "Best Cinematography Award for Documentaries" at the Diagonale festival. Most recently, in 2023, Yunus Roy Imer was nominated for the Swiss Film Award for Best Cinematography for 99 MOONS (directed by Jan Gassmann). The film had its world premiere at Cannes in the L'ACID section. His other works include BLACK NIGHT (directed by Özcan Alper), THE POET'S WIFE (directed by Helke Misselwitz), and WITHOUT THIS WORLD (directed by Nora Fingscheidt), for which Yunus Roy Imer was nominated for the German Cinematography Award in 2018.

In Nora Fingscheidt's latest feature film THE OUTFUN, Yunus Roy Imer was responsible for the cinematography. The film, starring Saoirse Ronan, is based on the bestselling memoir by Amy Liptrot. It had its world premiere at the Sundance Film Festival and its European premiere at Berlinale 2024. For his work, he was nominated for Best Cinematography at the British Independent Film Awards. In 2023, Yunus Roy Imer shot the Swiss-Iraqi co-production AL BASEER (directed by Ali Al-Fatlawi) in the southern water regions of Iraq. The film is currently in post-production.

Yunus Roy Imer is an alumnus of Berlinale Talents and Sarajevo Talents.

Selected Filmography

A HAPPY FAMILY, Production: C-FILMS AG
Cinema Film (2026) 120min, Director: Jan-Eric Mack

STATE OF US, Production: Cross Day Production
Cinema Film (2026), 100min, Director: Ollie Gardener & Jake Harvey

AL BASEER, Produktion: Dschoint Ventschr
Cinema Film (2026), in Postproduction, Director: Ali-Al Fat Lawi

DREAMING DOGS AND BARKING MEN, Production: RAUMZEITFILM
Documentary (2024), Director: Elsa Kremser & Levin Peter

THE OUTFUN, Production: Brock Media, Arcade Pictures & Weydemann Bros.
Cinema film (Premiere in 2024), director: Nora Fingscheidt

AL BASEER, Production: Dschoint Ventschr
Cinema film, in post-production, director: Ali-Al Fat Lawi

99MOONS, Production: Zodiac Pictures
Cinema film (2022), 110min, director: Jan Gassmann

BLACK NIGHT, Production: Nar Film
Cinema film (2022), 115min, director: Özcan Alper

SYSTEMSPRENGER, Production: KINEO | Weydemann Bros. | Oma Inge Film
Cinema film (2019), 120 min, director: Nora Fingscheidt

SPACE DOGS, Production: RAUMZEITFILM, IT WORKS! Media
Feature Documentary (2019), 90 min, director: Elsa Kremser & Levin Peter



C-FILMS AG

C-FILMS AG, based in Zurich, is active nationally and internationally in the development and production of feature films, television films, documentaries, and series. The management team consists of producers and owners Peter Reichenbach and Anne Walser, as well as managing director Roland Stebler.

The films produced by C-FILMS AG have won numerous awards and quality prizes both domestically and internationally, including several Swiss Film Awards, the German Film Award for DAS WAHRE LEBEN, a total of three European Film Awards for the co-production YOUTH by Oscar winner Paolo Sorrentino, as well as the Emmy Award for the co-productions IN THE NAME OF GOD and DIE MANNS – EIN JAHRHUNDERTROMAN. Productions such as SCHELLENURSLI, MEIN NAME IST EUGEN, GROUNDING – DIE LETZTEN TAGE DER SWISSAIR, DER VERDINGBUB, NACHTZUG NACH LISSABON, DER GOALIE BIN IG, and most recently the two feature films ZWINGLI and PLATZSPITZBABY also rank among the biggest box-office successes in recent Swiss film history.

In addition to numerous television and cinema productions, the company has also made a name for itself as a producer of successful series, such as the popular Swiss series WILDER and currently MALONEY.



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