



# SILVER HAZE

A FILM BY  
SACHA POLAK

*Berlinale*  
 73<sup>rd</sup> Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Panorama



## SYNOPSIS

23-year-old Franky is a nurse who lives with her large family in an East London borough. Obsessed with a thirst for revenge and a need to assign guilt for a traumatic event that happened 15 years before, she is unable to build any meaningful

relationship until she falls in love with one of her patients – Florence. They escape to the coast where Florence lives with her more open-minded patchwork family. There, Franky finds the emotional shelter to deal with the grudges of the past.



## **INTERVIEW WITH SACHA POLAK**

BY MARTA BAŁAGA



**You worked with Vicky Knight before, on 2019 *Dirty God*. But this time, you are actually referencing her own story.**

When we did *Dirty God*, she loved it so much. We were travelling the world, presenting the film at all these different festivals, and we got to know each other so well. I started to think we could easily do it again, but I wanted to make it more about her.

*Silver Haze* is loosely based on her own experiences [as a child, Knight survived an arson attack], but I also wanted to feel free as

a storyteller. Some of our financiers expected this film to be more of a documentary – instead, I opted for a minimal crew and just started exploring. At first, I wrote 20 pages, but it wasn't even a real script. Later, I realized I really needed one [laughter]. During the shoot, everyone would wear their own clothes and do their own makeup, and even if they lacked experience, they gave it their all.



**You never show the fire that changed Franky's life. It's just mentioned here, with everyone remembering it a bit differently. Why?**

We just didn't need it. I thought we needed this mystery at the beginning. I wanted people to wonder about what really happened to her. Make them wait, for as long as I could. The trauma is real, but a lot of what we are showing here is fictional. Franky has created

this whole narrative in her head, but it hasn't been solved yet. For Vicky, it has been very similar. She was a child when it happened. Later, when you are looking back at such early memories, it's hard to tell what's real and what's not.



**You are not focusing on her scars in the film. Instead, other characters keep praising her beauty, she seems confident. Was it something you both discussed?**

We talked about it, but I also noticed that this time around, Vicky was much stronger. She was much more comfortable in her skin, in front of the camera. In *Dirty God* – where she played the victim of an acid attack – she would get angry when we were filming her

scarred hands, for example. She wouldn't complain, but she felt insecure. Now, it wasn't the case at all. Also, we were shooting in her hometown, she was surrounded by family – her brother and sister both play in the film. I think she felt safe.



**Do you think you will continue to explore this relationship between reality and fiction?**

There is something about it I have always found very interesting. My father was a documentary filmmaker, so is my stepmother. In *Silver Haze*, Vicky's sister Charlotte plays her character's sister too – I thought their relationship was quite special and she turned out to be

a natural. But we didn't film inside Vicky's own house, as we didn't want to put too much pressure on her. Still, I have to say that my upcoming project *The Doll Factory*, a TV series for Paramount+, will be completely different. In that story, everything is so heightened.



**That show will reunite you with Esmé Creed-Miles, Vicky's co-star in *Silver Haze*. Do you like to return to the same actors or other collaborators? What does it give you?**

It will mark the third time we are working together with Esmé after [Amazon Prime Video show] *Hanna*. When we were filming it, I actually said to her: "Would you like to be in this crazy film? I don't even know what it's going to be about." [laughter]

She was used to much bigger budgets, but she was really up for this challenge. I might work with Vicky again, too. When you know each other, you can easily dive into things, explore deeper topics. It can be very lonely, making a film. But on a small production like ours, you really start feeling like a family.



**Speaking of families - you show very different relationships here, including one between Franky and Florence. Do you see your film as a love story?**

I wanted to see what could happen if these girls, coming from two different backgrounds, would finally get together. I feel that Florence is using Franky at first. She wants a girlfriend, or maybe just an accessory. She is narcissistic and it's hard for her to have real

relationships – the exact opposite of Franky, who is very caring. But she does give her something, and it means more than she could have even expected. They are both searching, figuring out what they need in life. Not to mention dealing with very different problems.



**Everyone is searching for something in *Silver Haze*. Also your supporting characters.**

It's true – it can be religion, love, it can be family. What Franky finds at the end is something I can relate to as well: this idea that you can always create your own community. There is a happy ending, with all these strange people coming together somehow. There is hope for the future. In this film, I wanted to avoid what is usually described as “poverty porn.” Yes, there is illness and alcohol, there are people

who for various reasons are simply not taking care of themselves. But when I was spending time with Vicky or with her family, I noticed so much more. They all live in the same house – where I am from, which is Amsterdam, you move out when you are 18 years old. For them, it's not possible, but I am not even sure it would make them happier. There is a lot of love and warmth there, and light, and I certainly wanted to show that.



## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Creating and promoting my previous film, *Dirty God*, was a long journey on which I was fortunate to embark an incredible artist, Vicky Knight. A healthcare assistant by day, Vicky had never stood in front of a camera before *Dirty God*. I was captured by her openness and her readiness to remain sincere and vulnerable in front of the camera. She blew everyone away with this performance which landed her a BAFTA award.

We spent a lot of time together preparing the film but then we also toured extensively to bring it to audiences all over the world. When you work with non-professional actors, you know that what you build is a relationship for life, yet the more we spent time together, the more I realised how special Vicky is. During those months ahead of the release, an idea

started to take shape, I was convinced of the fact that Vicky had so much more to give than just this one film and that the next one would need to address her own personal experience but without turning it into a documentary.

In *Dirty God*, Vicky's scars were part of the story line and she gave a great deal of herself exposing them to the world. *Silver Haze* is not about Vicky's scars but it is a way of bringing her own personal story to life. *Silver Haze* plays with reality but it also strays from it. Charlotte and Vicky are sisters in real life too, and there was a fire. Giving shape to Vicky's story allowed me to weave fiction with reality, hoping to produce something authentic and compelling that would be a match for the incredible person that Vicky is.



DIRECTOR

## SACHA POLAK

Sacha Polak is an award-winning director and writer. She graduated from the Dutch Film and Television Academy in 2006. Her first two feature films *Hemel* (2012) and *Zurich* (2014) received great critical acclaim from the international press. They were both selected at many international film festivals, *Hemel* won the Fipresci award (International Federation of Film Critics Award) at the Berlinale Forum and *Zurich* the International Confederation of Art Cinema Award (C.I.C.E.A award), the jury price for Best Film of Berlinale's Forum. Her latest feature *Dirty God*, about a young mother who is the victim of an acid attack, premiered in the World Cinema Dramatic Competition of Sundance 2019 and was the opening film of the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2019. After finishing *Dirty God*, Sacha directed a block of episodes for Season 2 of *Hanna* for Amazon. She is currently shooting 3 episodes of *The Doll Factory* for Paramount+. Her newest feature film *Silver Haze* premieres at Berlinale Panorama.

*Silver Haze*, 2023, Feature

*The Doll Factory*, 2023, series

*Hanna*, 2021, 2 episodes of series 2

*Dirty God*, 2019, Feature

*Zurich*, 2015, Feature

*New Boobs*, 2013, Documentary

*Hemel*, 2012, Feature

*Brother*, 2012, Short

*Under the table*, 2008, Short

*El Mourabbi*, 2007, Short

CAST

**VICKY KNIGHT**





CAST

**ESMÉ CREED-MILES**



CAST

**CHARLOTTE KNIGHT**

CAST

**ARCHIE BRIGDEN**





CAST

**TERRIANN COUSINS**

CAST

**ANGELA BRUCE**





PRODUCER

# VIKING FILM MARLEEN SLOT

THE NETHERLANDS

With Viking Film producer Marleen Slot thrives to be a nurturing home for talents from all across the world. Telling stories for audiences to strongly identify with, by filmmakers with whom she is closely connected. Viking Film believes in the power of real cooperation's, being that with directors, writers, co-producers, financiers, crew and cast. Only in collectivity we are capable of bringing stories to a different level and attracting audiences from around the globe.

Since its establishment in 2011, Viking Film wants to create high-quality films for both the national and international market with a special focus on arthouse and animation films.

Viking Film has (co)produced feature films by outstanding filmmakers from around the world, including *Silver Haze* (Sacha Polak, Berlinale Panorama 2023), *Oink* (Mascha Halberstad, Opening Film Berlinale Generation K+, 2022), *Dirty God* (Sacha Polak, Sundance World Dramatic Competition and opening film IFFR, 2019), *Rojo* (Benjamin Naishtat, TIFF Platform and San Sebastian 2018), *Neon Bull* (Gabriel Mascaro, Venice Orizzonti and TIFF Platform 2015) and *Zurich* (Sacha Polak, Berlinale Forum winner CICA Art Cinema Award 2015).

Together with director Mascha Halberstad, Marleen opened in 2020 the Holy Motion Studio in Arnhem. The 600m2 animation

studio is specialized in stopmotion animation and just released their first feature film, *OINK*, that was awarded Best Film of the Netherlands in 2022.

Marleen worked as a producer at Lemming Film for many years. In 2007 she attended the EAVE producer's training and in 2009 she participated in ACE. In 2013 she was selected Producer on the Move during the Cannes Film Festival, in 2021 she was part of Inside Pictures. Besides her work as a producer Marleen sees the importance of actively taking part in (inter)national film policy making. From 2016 until 2020 she has been chairman of the Netherlands Producers association and currently she is part of the board of ACE and of the Advisory College Public Broadcaster, set up by the Ministry of Culture.



CO-PRODUCER

**EMU FILMS**

**MICHAEL  
ELLIOTT**

UK

EMU's most recent titles include Terence Davies' *Benediction* and Steve McQueen's *Small Axe*.

This year *Silver Haze* by Sacha Polak will premiere at the Berlin Film Festival; A24 and MUBI will release Tom Hardiman's debut feature *Medusa Deluxe*; and *American Star*, a neo-noir directed by Gonzalo López-Gallego and starring Ian McShane, will be released by IFC.

Currently EMU are in post-production on *My Friend Lanre*, a feature documentary by Leo Regan, intimately portraying the life and death of British photojournalist Lanre Fehintola; and in pre-production on *Maria* by Simon Amstell, starring Sam Claflin and Jason Isaacs.

Last year EMU produced Season Four of *Documentary Now!*, the acclaimed US mockumentary series created by Seth Meyers, Fred Armisen, Bill Hader & Rhys Thomas.

Past credits include Daniel Wolfe's *Catch Me Daddy* (Cannes 2014), Guy Myhill's *The Goob* (Venice 2014), BAFTA nominated *Jawbone*, as well as *The Show*, the debut feature script from visionary Graphic novel writer Alan Moore, and Sacha Polak's critically acclaimed *Dirty God* (Sundance 2019).

## WORLD PREMIERE

Berlinale 2023 – Panorama

## FILM INFORMATION

Original Title: Silver Haze  
International title: Silver Haze  
Genre: Drama  
Countries  
of production: The Netherlands,  
United Kingdom  
Year: 2023  
Duration: 102 min  
Picture: Color  
Aspect Ratio: 1:2:39  
Sound: 5.1  
Available Format: DCP

## CAST

Vicky Knight as Franky  
Esmé Creed-Miles as Florence  
Charlotte Knight as Leah  
Archie Brigden as Jack  
TerriAnn Cousins as Jenn  
Angela Bruce as Alice

## CREW

Director: Sacha Polak  
Screenplay: Sacha Polak  
Cinematography: Tibor Dingelstad  
Editing: Lot Rossmark  
Production Design: Elena Isolini  
Music / Composer: Ella van der Woude,  
Joris Oonk  
Sound design: Jan Schermer  
Sound on set: Job Michel  
Production company: Viking Film and EMU Films  
Producers: Marleen Slot and Mike Elliott

With financial support of:  
Netherlands Filmfund, Netherlands Production  
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