

PILGRIMS 7 CORP

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CAN HITLER HAPPEN HERE?

Directed and Produced: Saskia Rifkin

Written and Executive Produced: Catherine May Levin

Filmed on location in Brooklyn, NY

Format: Black & White

Aspect Ratio: 4:3

Filmed with Arri Alexa Monochrome Digital Camera on Arri Raw

Cast

Laura Esterman - Lead Actor

Laura Esterman has appeared in countless Broadway- and off-Broadway shows, including *Teibele* and *her Demon*, opposite F. Murray Abraham; *The Suicide*, with Derek Jacobi; *Metamorphosis*, with Mikhail Baryshnikov; Neil Simon's *God's Favorite*, Mike Leigh's *2,000 Years*, and *Marvin's Room*, for which she won the Obie, Drama Desk and Outer Critics' awards. She was featured in the films *Awakenings*, *Ironweed*, *Arranged*, *The Green*, and starred in the horror thriller *Suspended Animation*, which was directed by John Hancock (Bang the Drum Slowly).

Synopsis

The trouble for Miriam Kohen—a wealthy, elderly recluse who doesn't venture past the front door of her Upper East mansion—starts with her neighbor Cynthia, a well-heeled matron fretting over the upkeep of her impeccable house that abuts Miriam's crumbling one. Miriam's son, Josh, living in L.A., is also worried about the state of what Miriam calls her "landfill," an Upper East Side townhouse strewn with empty vodka bottles, take-out containers, papers, art supplies, and her beloved paintings.

Not long after she accepts Cynthia's offer of help, a succession of characters begin knocking on her door. There are real-estate investors who want to buy her house, and city social workers inquiring about her welfare. Even the police barge in. Her once isolated existence is constantly being interrupted.

Her perceptions start to change. Her neighbors and family members shift from bourgeois types who simply don't understand her preferred lifestyle to a nefarious web conspiring to take away her "landfill," the only place she feel safe.

Told from Miriam's perspective, the narrative becomes increasingly extreme and convoluted as it unfolds, leading viewers to question the narrator herself. Are the people and events she describes any more real than the figures in her life-size works of art?

A study of the fascinating fine line between madness and genius, the film allows the viewer a glimpse into the mind of a reclusive artist whose home has become both sanctuary and second skin. Scenes of chaos, both inner and outer, offer a visceral sense of what it feels like for creative personalities whose shifting consciousness is paradoxically both their greatest asset and biggest handicap. When meddling neighbors begin to take umbrage at Miriam's refusal to conform to social norms, an intricate battle of wits and wills ensues.

A brave exploration of geriatric female sexuality, the film does not shy away from this taboo subject. Rather, it's first-time female director Saskia Rifkin, approaches the themes of privacy, mental illness, victimization, feminism, and civil rights head-on. This cautionary tale is made even more provocative by the cinematography, which maintains high production values while not conforming to any current cinematic trends. *Can Hitler Happen Here?* educates and disturbs, disrupts and surprises.

Director's Statement

When I read the script for *Can Hitler Happen Here*, I instantly fell in love with Miriam—and that's despite the fact she's totally ornery and unlikable.

In the world of cinema where there are few leading roles for women over 50 (let alone 70), *Can Hitler Happen Here?* is notable for featuring a principal heroine in her 70s. But it's not just her age that sets Miriam apart. Far from being an elderly female archetype, Miriam offers a daring character study of a vibrant, stubborn, individualistic woman intent on holding on to her home and iconoclastic lifestyle.

The unique spirit of the movie's central protagonist comes directly from the screenwriter, Catherine May Levin, another powerful and rebellious woman in her 70s. Though the truly uncommon storyline script is not directly autobiographical, the author, like her fictional counterpart, has long railed against undue restrictions and outdated stereotypes levied on her because of her gender.

I understood immediately that, as a director, in order to do the film justice I would have to closely examine my own insecurities and biases to summon the same spirit of courage as possessed by Catherine and Miriam. Ironically, it was the work I've done throughout my career with male artists, such as Robert Longo, Abel Ferrara, and Gregory Crewdson, which proved the most valuable in this effort. By putting myself in opposition to these men, I was able to understand, internalize, and harness Miriam's hubristic fire.

As a filmmaker and mother of three young children, it is also my hope that my first feature film will foster a broader discussion about the double standards when it comes to the role of older women in our society and help audiences broaden their perspective.

Director Bio - Saskia Rifkin

Saskia Rifkin, a director and producer, has over twenty years experience working in independent film, television, and contemporary art. For the past decade, she has partnered with the internationally renowned artist Gregory Crewdson to produce his critically and commercially successful, major photography projects. These include *Beneath the Roses*, a series that took nearly a decade to complete with a crew of over one hundred people (and was the subject of the 2012 feature documentary *Gregory Crewdson: Brief Encounters*.) Most recently, she produced his series *Cathedral of the Pines*, exhibited at Gagosian Gallery in January 2016. Saskia has also supervised the production of numerous films and TV shows for prominent producers and directors such as Mark Burnett and Abel Ferrara. A native New Yorker, she began her career by pursuing a degree in Film and Culture Studies at Barnard College; during that time she worked in the studio with seminal visual artist Robert Longo. *Can Hitler Happen Here* (2017) is her feature film directorial debut.

Co-Producer Bio - Jay Cannold

Jay Cannold has overseen production on many films and tv shows - including independent films by top directors Jon Favreau, Spike Lee, Abel Ferrara as well as top TV producers Mark Burnett, Ben Silverman and Paul Buccieri.

Director of Photography Bio - Frederic Fasano

Frederic Fasano has worked as a cinematographer since 1999 when he shot Asia Argento's first feature, *Scarlet Diva*. Since then he has worked on a variety of international productions in both narrative and documentary forms. He has chosen projects that provide him opportunities to shoot in a variety of countries, cultures, and landscapes including Greenland, Thailand, Japan, Norway, and Brazil. For over five years, Frederic collaborated with renowned Italian filmmaker Dario Argento with whom he shot three features. In 2009, Frederic moved to the U.S. to further his passion for capturing diverse images and stories. Since arriving, he has worked on several feature narrative films as well as shorts and documentaries. In his career, he has worked with international talents including Adrien Brody, Udo Kier, Emmanuelle Seigner, Michael Imperioli, Paz de la Huerta, and Wendell Pierce. Frederic is represented by Alexander Creatives in New York City.

Frederic was born in Denmark and raised in Copenhagen and Noto, Sicily. The latter is where, as a teenager, he first developed an interest in photography, documenting the southeastern Sicilian landscape for a local newspaper and exhibition. He moved to Milan at the age of 19

where he started working as a photographer's assistant and opened his own studio in 1993 and worked for magazines, art galleries and in advertising. In 1995, he completed studies at Scuola del Cinema di Milano and in 1996, opened a production company. Frederic believes the power of film is because, as Fellini said, "cinema is the most direct way to enter into competition with God."

Production Designer Bio - Jesika Farkas

Jesika is a New York based production designer. She is a graduate of Bard College and the Interior Design Program from the Fashion Institute of Technology. With over a decade of design experience, and a background working in architecture and interior design, she had the opportunity to design her first short in 2010. It was then she realized that production design was the perfect marriage of her skill set and her love of visual storytelling.

Her work has screened at Tribeca, Toronto, SXSW, Sundance and at the EFM in Berlin. Recent design credits include *Dixieland* directed by Hank Bedford starring Chris Zylka, Riley Keough and Faith Hill; *Strange Weather* directed by Katherine Dieckmann and starring Holly Hunter and Carrie Coon; *Can Hitler Happen Here* directed by Saskia Rifkin, and most recently, *One Percent More Humid* directed by Liz Garcia starring Juno Temple and Julia Garner.

Jesika currently splits her time between New York City and the historic city of Kingston, NY. It is the birthplace of the innovative O+ Festival, of which she is a founding member and served for several years on the Art Committee. Jesika exhibited her moss art installations for the 2012 festival. She continues to design interiors alongside making movies.

Composer Bio - Michael A. Levine

Michael A. Levine was the series composer for the Jerry Bruckheimer/CBS dramas *Cold Case* and *Close to Home*, for which he was awarded eight ASCAP awards, and is the series composer for the not-yet-released George Lucas-produced *Star Wars Detours*, an animated *Star Wars* parody. He scored the award-winning documentary, *Landfill Harmonic*, and wrote its Oscar-shortlisted song, *Cateura - Vamos a Soñar*. He wrote the theme song (*Go Tell Aunt Rhody/Everybody's Dead*) for *Resident Evil VII Biohazard VR* - the first VR game in the RE series – and was music producer for Lorde's version of *Everybody Wants to Rule the World* and chart-topping records for Nat and Alex Wolff. Michael also composed the theme for *Scrat*, the saber tooth squirrel featured in the *Ice Age* shorts.

Levine provided additional music and violin on a number of Hans Zimmer scores, including *The Simpsons Movie*, *Batman: The Dark Knight*, *Megamind*, and *Rango*. Michael's choir arrangement of *Spider Pig* was conducted by Hans at the Hollywood Bowl in 2015. Levine's concert music includes *Anthem*, performed by piano virtuoso Lang Lang in 2014 in Beijing. An upcoming album features duets with percussionist great Evelyn Glennie on mallets and Michael on electric violin.

Michael began his career in advertising where he composed the classic Kit Kat candy bar “Gimme a Break” jingle. Levine is a Governor of the Television Academy (Emmys) Music peer group.

Selected Credits: *Television City 40* (2016), documentary Netflix *Star Wars: Detours George Lucas* (completed), *The Makeover* (2013) TV Movie ABC *Outsourced* (2010-2011) Theme/ NBC *Cold Case* (2003-2010). Jerry Bruckheimer/ CBS *Close To Home* (2005-2007), Jerry Bruckheimer/ CBS Drew Carey's Green Screen Show (2004) Drew Carey/ WB, Film Lego DC *Supergirls – A Case of the Mondays* (in post), WB *Landfill Harmonic* (2016), *French Kiss* (2015) *Fugly* (2014)

CREDITS: PILGRIMS 7 PRESENTS

A FILM BY SASKIA RIFKIN

CAN HITLER HAPPEN HERE?

Casting By
JUDY HENDERSON CSA

Production Designer
JESIKA FARKAS

Costume Designer
LINDA BELKEBIR

Music By
MICHAEL A. LEVINE

Editor
DAVE ROCK

Director of Photography
FREDERIC FASANO

Co-Producer
JAY CANNOLD

Executive Producer
CATHERINE MAY LEVIN

Produced By
SASKIA RIFKIN

Written By
CATHERINE MAY LEVIN

Directed By
SASKIA RIFKIN

Production Manager
MIKHAEL ANTONE

First Assistant Director
LAURA KLEIN
MATT KEYSER

Second Assistant Director
ANDREAS O'DONOHUE
LUIZA VILLACA

Cast

MIRIAM KOHEN - LAURA ESTERMAN

CYNTHIA PORTER - TRACY SHAYNE

COLBY PORTER - JOHN PIRKIS

JESUS - ALEXANDER QUIROGA

JOSH KOHEN - MARK MCCULLOUGH THOMAS

PATRICIA - BERNADETTE QUIGLEY

DREW PIERCE - SEAN CULLEN

LUTHER SMYTHE - JULIAN GAMBLE

DR BONO - IAN BLACKMAN

BOOTSY FOSTER - COMFORT CLINTON

CHAZ PORTER - JAKE MURPHY

BACK DOOR COP #1 - KEN WONG

BACK DOOR COP #2 - EARL WEATHERS

FRONT DOOR COP - MOHAMMED ALI

POLICE SUPERVISOR - BRUCE FAULK

ROOKIE COP - ARI STACHEL

AMBULANCE SOCIAL WORKER - ELEEN HANNAH

JORGE - NICK ROMANIELLO

NICO - SAMUEL SWANSON

JAVIER - AJ CEDENO

JUSTINE - KIMBERLY HUIE

WARREN - CHRISTIAN DEMARAIS

JOE - DAVIS CANNADA

GAVIN - DECLAN MOONEY

HAROLD - MARK DOHERTY

CAROLINA DU PRES - KARIN DE LA PENHA

DEP MAN #1 - ERIC FREEMAN

FIREMAN - MANNY AYALA

POLICEMAN - TIMOTHY JOHN SMITH

POLICEWOMAN - TERESA HUI

STUNT COORDINATOR - MANNY SIVERIO

MIRIAM Stunt Double - DEJAY ROESTENBURG