

# FINAL PRESSKIT

**ARRI** Media

presents

a production of



# CURVEBALL

**Directed by**  
Johannes Naber

**Written by**  
Oliver Keidel, Johannes Naber,

**Starring**  
Sebastian Blomberg, Dar Salim,  
Virginia Kull, Thorsten Merten, Michael Wittenborn, and others

**A Bon Voyage Films Production**

**in Co-Production with**  
ARRI Media Productions,  
SWR, ARTE, NDR, BR

**Co-Producers**  
Antonio Exacoustos, Joseph M'Barek

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Oliver Keidel – *Screenplay*  
Sten Mende – *Cinematographer/D.O.C.*  
Tamo Kunz – *Production Design*  
Amir Hamz – *Producer (Bon Voyage Films)*  
Christian Springer – *Producer (Bon Voyage Films)*  
Fahri Yardim – *Producer (Bon Voyage Films)*  
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## SUMMARY

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Bioweapons expert Wolf (*Sebastian Blomberg*) of the German Federal Intelligence Service BND is obsessed with the idea that, despite the UN inspections, anthrax is still being produced in Iraq. Back home in Germany, his superior Schatz (*Thorsten Merten*) assigns him as case officer for the Iraqi asylum seeker Rafid Alwan (*Dar Salim*) – because Alwan claims to have worked as an engineer for Saddam Hussein’s secret bioweapons program. It’s a rare triumph for a secret service not exactly spoiled by success: finally they have a piece of intelligence that would put them one step ahead of the CIA. What they are missing, though, is proof. The search for which proves difficult, as ‘Curveball’ is well aware of his value to the agency. His claims, meanwhile, end up serving a number of decidedly different interests – the CIA, the German government, everyone is trying to use his incredible story for their own purposes. Thus, bit by bit, a construed story becomes reality and a lie becomes the truth. A truth, which sets in motion a chain of events that forever changes the global political landscape.

## PRESS BRIEFING

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Captivating, absurd, as serious as it is funny, and yet highly entertaining, with the story of ‘Curveball’, director Johannes Naber created a political drama that veers into the grotesque. For as unbelievable as it may seem, it is a true story – unfortunately. Based on real events, CURVEBALL recounts how Rafid Alwan’s testimony was used by intelligence agencies and politicians to best further their own agendas. How it was misused for personal career advancement and political power plays. And how it ultimately provided the key arguments to justify the 2003 war in Iraq.

As BND officer Wolf, Sebastian Blomberg once again impresses with a performance between gravity and comedy – with equally inspiring acting by Dar Salim (Borgen, Game Of Thrones) as ‘Curveball’, American actress Virginia Kull (The Looming Tower) as a CIA bioweapons expert, and Thorsten Merten (Gundermann) and Michael Wittenborn (Toni Erdmann) as BND officers.

Johannes Naber already received numerous awards for his directorial debut *The Albanian*, and his feature film *Age of Cannibals* won, among others, a bronze Lola and the German Film Critics’ Award for Best Picture. Together with Oliver Keidel, he also wrote the screenplay to CURVEBALL.

CURVEBALL is a production by Bon Voyage Films (Amir Hamz, Christian Springer, and Fahri Yardim) in cooperation with ARRI Media (Antonio Exacoustos, Joseph M’Barek), SWR (lead editor: Stefanie Groß), ARTE, NDR, and BR. The production was funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media, DFFF German Film Fund, FFA Film Fund, Film Fund Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein, and MFG Media and Film Society Baden-Württemberg.

CURVEBALL will make its world premiere at the Berlinale 2020 as part of the “Berlinale Special Gala”.

## SYNOPSIS

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**1997:** As part of a UN weapons inspections mission, Dr. Arndt Wolf, bioweapons expert for the German intelligence service BND, is looking for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. He is obsessed with the idea that Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein is still producing WMDs in secret. However, despite scouring the whole country for evidence, he and his fellow inspectors – among them Leslie Shearer, his American colleague from the CIA with whom Wolf has an affair – have found nothing. As a result, the mission is cancelled, Wolf has to return to Germany, and Leslie to the US.

**1999:** Some time after returning back home to the BND headquarters in Pullach, Wolf is called up from his lab to the executive floor for a meeting. There he meets department head Schatz and liaison officer Retzlaff, who brought in Wolf as the resident expert on Iraq. Since the end of the weapons inspections in Iraq, none of the major intelligence services have any more agents on the ground. The CIA, MI6, Mossad – nobody has access to up-to-date intelligence. But now Retzlaff reports that he has recruited Rafid Alwan, a potential Iraqi informant, in an asylum seeker's home in the Bavarian town Zirndorf. And indeed, Alwan's first statements, a videotape of which is shown to Wolf, appear to reveal inside knowledge of Iraqi bioweapons production. Wolf, who had spent three years in Iraq looking for bioweapons, quickly exposes Retzlaff's lack of expertise. Despite Retzlaff's protest, Schatz assigns Wolf as the new case officer: he should lead the questioning of this Rafid Alwan. Wolf, however, has his doubts that there is anything to it.

In the course of Wolf's interview, Rafid explains that, as an engineer, he had performed maintenance on equipment used in the production of anthrax spores. He also tells of an accident involving bioweapons that caused several deaths. However, out of professed fear of the Iraqi secret service, Rafid remains vague in his statements, requesting protection and new accommodation outside of the asylum seekers' home before disclosing any further information. And so the BND sets him up with his own apartment, but not without putting in place a number of bugs and video surveillance.

**2000:** As the interrogations continue, Wolf demands proof for Rafid's claims. Proof that he really was there, names, anything. But out of concern for his safety, Rafid still refuses to give up anything concrete – and in turn demands a German passport before he will do so. For Schatz, that is completely out of the question: they will need to verify Rafid's statements some other way. At the very least, they should be able to find some independent corroborating evidence for that bioweapons accident he went on record with. At BND staff meeting, he gives Wolf one more week to bring new proof, otherwise he will put a halt to the investigation before the BND looks like a bunch of idiots.

Wolf proposes a different solution to Schatz: they should take a blood sample from Rafid. Due to the anthrax accident he claims to have witnessed, his blood would have to show anthrax antibodies. If so, it would be the proof they needed. Unfortunately, though, only the Americans have access to the necessary equipment for a reliable analysis – and since the German Chancellery, according to Schatz, plans to present the Iraqi as a "game changer" in the US, Wolf cannot officially ask for the CIA's help. Instead, Wolf suggests contacting his former colleague Leslie on the quiet. It's their first meeting in years, and Leslie reacts to his request with reserved skepticism. Despite her concerns, she takes the sample, but tells him that without an official request she won't be able to have it analyzed.

Schatz permits Wolf to try a different approach in his search for proof: Wolf wants to get closer to Rafid on an informal, private, and emotional level, to feign friendship. And even though Wolf is more of a loner at heart, it works. Wolf does have to promise him a German passport in return, but Rafid finally reveals some actionable intelligence: Iraq does indeed possess bioweapons – on mobile production facilities. A simple sketch he draws for Wolf shows a laboratory on the back of a truck. According to Rafid, several of these trucks are constantly on the move throughout Iraq. Once production is complete, their cargo would be transferred at Djerf-al-Nadaf, a factory site well known to Western intelligence agencies. That's why Wolf and his colleagues were never able to find anything.

Wolf deems the information plausible and presents it to the BND – and for Schatz, the news is exactly the bombshell he had been hoping for. Despite Wolf's urging to wait on confirmation of Rafid's information, Schatz immediately passes it on to allied intelligence services – and, brimming

with pride, announces their reaction. The BND delivered what nobody else could! The CIA describes the intelligence as a 'potential game changer' and assigns Rafid his own code name: Curveball. Even German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder sends his personal thanks. Wolf sees a bright future for himself and his colleagues, with career opportunities he never dared dream of.

Nevertheless, there are growing doubts at the BND about the veracity of Rafid's statements. Not only does his antibody test – which, based on the BND's report, Leslie had ordered done after all – turn out negative, but the appearance of an incriminating satellite surveillance picture proves that the production of bioweapons could not have been conducted the way Rafid claims: a wall at Djerfal-Nadaf would've prevented the huge trucks from accessing the facility. And last but not least, the BND discovers a printout of the UN Iraqi weapons inspections report in Rafid's apartment, a report that Wolf himself had contributed to. Highlighted, a paragraph in which the inspectors speculate about the possible transfer of bioweapons production facilities onto trucks. Rafid had literally fed Wolf his own idea.

It's a development that Schatz cannot withhold from the Chancellery – or so he claims. And they demand for heads to roll. Wolf is suspended. And Rafid admits to Retzlaff during an interrogation that the trucks never existed.

**2001:** (documentary footage) On September 11, 2001, the terror attacks on the World Trade Center throw the world into turmoil. President Bush addresses Congress and speaks of justice that will be served, and in the US and, a short time later, also in Germany, the first suspected cases of anthrax in mail deliveries appear.

Leslie visits Wolf, who has been on mandatory leave for more than a year now. 9/11 has changed a lot of things for her as well. She asks Wolf for access to Curveball. Wolf tells her about Rafid being a liar and him being relieved from duty. Wolf is surprised by her request – he had firmly believed the BND had informed the CIA – as is customary in such cases – that their source had been "burned". Leslie, however, remains undeterred, insisting that Curveball is still an important piece of the puzzle, and asks Wolf to keep an eye on him. Thus, Wolf gets in touch with Rafid again – and learns that Retzlaff had meanwhile presented Rafid with a German passport. Wolf is stunned: he lost his job, but Alwan received his passport. In a private conversation, he asks Rafid one last time if he knew anything about bioweapons. Rafid shakes his head.

Livid with rage, Wolf visits Retzlaff at the BND and demands to know why Rafid received a German passport and why the CIA still considers Curveball an active source. Retzlaff explains that the other intelligence agencies were never actually informed and refers him to Schatz – who by now has made a home at the Chancellery in Berlin, his career having experienced a sudden upswing. Still angry, Wolf drives up to Berlin and confronts Schatz. Schatz tells him in no uncertain terms that the decision to withhold the information about Curveball was a political one. Wolf threatens to contact the press, but Schatz counters coldly that Wolf would only hurt himself by doing that – he was, after all, the sole originator of Rafid's tale of bioweapons trucks. He might even be tried for treason. And just like that, Wolf has been sidelined.

**2002:** (documentary footage) US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld argues that no other state poses a greater threat to world peace than Saddam Hussein and Iraq. According to Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, on the other hand, the Middle East needs "Iraq to be included, needs lots of new peace, but not a new war."

**2003:** A completely distraught Rafid shows up at Wolf's home, terrified that the Iraqi secret service is after him. And indeed: as soon as Wolf takes his eyes off Rafid for a moment, the Iraqi is kidnapped. All Wolf hears is a scuffle, and he just barely manages to follow the black van in his car. It soon dawns on him that it's not the Iraqis who have kidnapped Rafid, but Leslie and the CIA. Leslie wants to record an interview with Rafid's testimony about the bioweapons trucks for broadcast in the US. As she explains to Rafid, he is supposed to be the key witness in their bid to eliminate Saddam Hussein. At that moment, Wolf appears and confronts Leslie. But Leslie's mind is set: It doesn't matter if Curveball's story is true or not. "Truth doesn't matter. Justice matters." – "And that gives you the right to twist the facts?" – "We make the facts." The interview, however, does not happen, as, with Wolf's help, Rafid manages to escape.

On February 5, 2003, Colin Powell addresses the disarmament of Iraq in a speech to the UN Security Council, at that time chaired by Germany's Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer. He refers to intelligence information by an Iraqi engineer who has provided evidence of mobile bioweapon labs on trucks. Exactly as Rafid had described, complete with a graphical presentation shown in the Security Council assembly hall. It's an almost perfect reproduction of the sketch Rafid had drawn for Wolf. Joschka Fischer refrains from commenting on Powell's statements.

A short time later, Retzlaff offers Rafid an employment contract with a BND shell company. For 3000 euros a month, all he has to do is keep quiet and stay out of the public eye, otherwise he will lose all his privileges. Wolf, on the other hand, receives a summons from Schatz, who justifies the recent events by means of their political context and refers to Chancellor Schröder, who, after all, has made it very clear that he is opposed to the war. Also, who can truly say if there really aren't bioweapons somewhere out there in Iraq? Schatz offers Wolf a new high-paying job at the BND.

On March 19, 2003, the first targeted bomb strikes on Baghdad announce the beginning of the second Iraq war.

## **INTERVIEW WITH JOHANNES NABER AND OLIVER KEIDEL**

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### **What inspired you to turn the events surrounding 'Curveball' into a movie?**

**JN:** In 2011, producer Amir Hamz approached me with the idea of taking the story and making it into a movie. I was familiar with Curveball from the press and began my research. Amir was in contact with Stefan Buchen, who had shot a TV documentary about Rafid Alwan for German broadcaster NDR. We started to meet regularly – together with Wolfgang Kohlhaase, who provided many dramaturgical impulses during that early phase. Oliver came in some time later.

**OK:** Our focus at the time was predominantly on the BND and the German government, and their rather inglorious role in what happened. While we were working on developing the story, all kinds of previously unimaginable things happened in world politics and the scope of the decisions made back then was becoming ever clearer.

### **In what way? Can you elaborate on that?**

**OK:** Governments had always been lying to the public, of course, especially when it came to war. But in 2003, the US administration wanted to impose its specific military doctrine and attack Iraq, even though it obviously hadn't been involved in the attacks on 9/11. They said something about weapons of mass destruction and didn't really seem to care that a large part of the world could instantly smell the lie. It was a whole new level of audacity. Almost a kind of admission: "Everybody already knows politicians are liars, so we can say whatever we want." It's a strategy of confusion that has become very popular today, fake news, etc. And by now, the US isn't the only country where presidents, despite overwhelming evidence of corruption, simply call their opposition liars – and remain in office. And we all have grown somewhat tired of having to sift through the madness, looking for the facts.

**JN:** The Curveball scandal was massively underestimated by the media. There was no big outcry, just one small revelation after the other. It was the point when our generation realized they were being lied to about the Iraq war, but there was no proof. Which is why our mass protests had no effect. If we had known back then that our own government – which publicly opposed the war – was holding back evidence like that... I'm sure this whole thing would have played out very differently.

### **How did you conduct your research, what sources did you use?**

**JN:** Since there already existed an extensive amount of publications on the subject, first of all, we worked our way through those. These were documentaries like the one by Stefan Buchen, various interviews with Rafid Alwan, for example in the Guardian, where he gave first-hand accounts. With that as foundation, we started delving into the background, speaking with a wide variety of contemporary witnesses and experts. Stefan Buchen, for example, personally spoke to me about a number of facts on the subject that were previously unfamiliar to me. Hansjörg Geier, who had been president of the BND until 1998 and August Hanning's predecessor (note: 'Curveball' happened during Hanning's tenure), provided me with interesting insights into the structure of the BND and its connections to the Chancellery. He told me how, in the late 90s, the newly elected red-green coalition government completely overhauled their connection with the BND (note: the coalition was formed by the "red", social democratic SPD and the "green" Alliance '90/The Greens party). It's no secret that, especially under Chancellor Kohl, the relationship between the federal government and the BND was rather strained, but under red-green there was a rapprochement and completely new forms of cooperation. Joschka Fischer in particular had been a driving force behind that. The significance of the BND for German politics changed as a result, and you have to regard 'Curveball' in that context as well. I also spoke with Hans-Christian Ströbele, who had been on the parliamentary control committee at the time. I wanted to know what really happened back then. The BND reported to the control committee about its activities on a regular basis – so what did they have to say about 'Curveball'? But Ströbele's assessment of why Joschka Fischer did what he did was also very interesting.



**OK:** In addition to factual research, we also tried to look at the human aspects of the story: what is it that makes these secret service people tick? For that, I spoke with a wide range of people in that particular field, meaning mostly BND and CIA/DIA. When it came to facts, I had to be very careful – misdirection and secrecy is their specialty, after all. These people truly live in a very special state of paranoia, and I found out just how contagious that is. Where secrecy is an institutional virtue and veracity may end up being punishable, the foundation of reality we all like to base our opinions on simply disappears. As such, it's no surprise that even the world's best intelligence agencies fall victim to such banal traps. That was the real information I took away from these conversations.

### **But you never spoke directly with Rafid Alwan?**

**JN:** No. For the simple reason that we didn't want to become his instruments. He shouldn't be able to claim that we presented the story the way he told it. And nobody should be able to accuse us of predominantly depicting his twisted view of things. It needs to be said that he is a massively unreliable source of information. We didn't want to depend on that.

**OK:** Rafid Alwan has already publicized his story in great detail several times, there is a documentary, TV-reportages, and extensive interviews with him. He has a lot to justify as a human being, and we respect that. But what was important to us was that this story wasn't about someone who had lied about his past. Because that soon became public knowledge and for the intelligence agencies it was business as usual. For us, it's about the whole apparatus and the human absurdities that allow something like that to have such incredibly dramatic consequences – DESPITE the fact that everyone knows it was a lie.

### **The story of CURVEBALL seems very farfetched, but it is based on real events. Which gives rise to the question, what in the movie is fiction and what is truth?**

**JN:** First of all, you have to understand that we made a feature film and not a documentary, of course we incorporate fiction. Nevertheless, we had high standards for authenticity and truth.

**OK:** Precisely. Those are some pretty big words to which we, as the story tellers, had to first align ourselves. Cinema, a feature film, simply isn't reality, even if we spent years doing research and nailed down all the extraneous facts. We do, after all, investigate many private moments of our characters, the blank spaces in between what can be documented. We quickly realized that if we still tried to disguise everything as truth in a documentary manner, especially with the topic at hand, we would cross the threshold into something utterly false. That's why it was so important to us to constantly and clearly convey the cinematic, the condensed nature of the story. As a small nod to the audience: Yes, this is a true story. But it's still a story. We're telling you how we see it.

**JN:** The crucial point is that the core of the storyline and the motives of the people involved are real. Ultimately, there were two key dramaturgical decisions we had to make regarding "fictionalization".

### **Which were?**

**JN:** First: how do we bring the conflicts and the complex situation towards the end of the story to a clear conclusion; and second, how do we choose the characters for our story? Except for Rafid Alwan, most of the characters might be fictional, but they are based on real people. Wolf, for example, was modeled after a real person, who had been in Iraq for the UN, was an expert for biological agents for the BND, and thus became the case officer for Rafid Alwan – despite not having any experience in handling a source at all. Stefan Buchen had extensive conversations with said man, so we know a lot about him, even though he never went public. Or Schatz, whose character is based on actual high-ranking BND officers working as liaison between Pullach and the Chancellery, to which the BND is directly subordinate. On the other hand, both Leslie's character and her relationship to Wolf are entirely fictional. Even though Leslie is still somewhat based in reality, as her and Wolf's relationship ultimately represents the evolution of the German-American relationship: the initial infatuation, the mutual reliance, and finally the estrangement and breakdown of relations as a result of September 11.

**OK:** Ultimately, each character represents an institutional system: Retzlaff – the BND, Schatz – the connection between the BND and the Chancellery, and then Leslie – the US from the German perspective. As to the other point Johannes raised: how much of our story's conclusion is fictional? The showdown in the snow, the escape on the sled – that is fictional, of course, just like Leslie's TV interview with Rafid. But all of that is based on very clear and very real background information. In a letter to president of the BND Hanning, George Tenet, the former head of the CIA, actually did state that the CIA wanted to conduct a TV interview with Rafid Alwan that was to be broadcast on American television. The BND was able to prevent that. There are also indications that the CIA had been searching for Rafid's secret whereabouts at the time. We tried to distill the facts down to their content-related essence, to their truthfulness. It's a fine line.

**In addition to the question of veracity or fiction, another important decision must have been the tone of the movie.**

**JN:** We actually did deliberate for quite some time about how far we want and how far we *can* take the humor. Following AGE OF CANNIBALS, I was in the mood for sharp black humor, and that's how I wanted to portray the BND and tell this story. But then we realized that the subject was far too serious and its consequences – a war that cost hundreds of thousands of lives – far too tragic to be joked about. Of course, there are several great examples we had in mind, like 'Wag the Dog', for instance. But there's a huge difference between talking about a fictitious war and a real one. So despite our desire to exaggerate, we tried to do justice to the seriousness of the subject.

**OK:** The way we tell the story, the satirical element, the farce, resides most of all in the absurd way that people interact with each other, in this machine that is the BND. Everyone seems to have their own little agenda, and it's always just about small, petty things and not about this big heroic thing behind it. The absurd thing for me is that, on the one hand, it's about everything, about war, the world, a turning point in history. But on the other hand, the characters seem unable to look past their own nose. Because they're still people. The tragedy of being human. You can see Wolf in that context as well, there's certainly something of a Don Quixote to him. That and the deadly serious consequences – they are two sides of the same coin.

**For this balancing act between seriousness and grotesque, you were able to rely on a great ensemble of actors.**

**JN:** Absolutely. For the central character, Wolf, my mind was set on Sebastian Blomberg early on. I believe him to be one of Germany's best actors, and the way he switches back and forth between these extremes, it's amazing. He became the focal point around which we built the rest of the cast. Dar Salim was a pleasant surprise, because before CURVEBALL he had mainly played in thrillers and action films, never a role like this one. But I was convinced of his acting skills, and with a wig and a mustache, it worked out perfectly. As an Iraqi by birth, the way we wanted to portray Rafid Alwan wasn't quite easy for him, of course, as he didn't want to convey the image of an Arab cliché. But he trusted us and really dove into the character, for which I give him a lot of credit. Michael Wittenborn I mainly knew as an excellent stage actor, and from his performance in TONI ERDMANN I was aware of his talent for comedy. And Thorsten Merten is someone I always wanted to work with. His performance in HALBE TREPPE (GRILL POINT) is still one of the greatest examples of comedy ever, in my opinion. And since Schatz is both a dramatic and somewhat evil character but also holds a tremendous potential for comedy, Thomas Merten was the perfect choice.

**Going back to the story of 'Curveball': What do you think, how could something like that even happen?**

**JN:** At its core, CURVEBALL is about the way we deal with the truth: how information becomes a commodity and the truth falls by the wayside. It's a timeless topic, and it's not like 'Curveball' is an isolated case. Because in the context of intelligence agencies or the context of secrecy in general, the people involved always make use of what best fits their own agenda. With 'Curveball' you can see that taken to the extreme, for example in Powell's speech to the UN Security Council. If nobody can hold you accountable, since you can always plead the need for secrecy, both the reshaping of the truth and the selection of individual and then rearranged facts can result in a very distorted picture of the truth. Something you can no longer verify. And that right there is the very principle of

secrecy. What that ultimately means is that intelligence information is per se made to be exploited. And that, in the end, this non-verifiability also means that those who can best juggle the individual elements of the truth will reap the most professional gain. To put it bluntly: intelligence agencies should simply be abolished. But if that is not an option, then our plea is to, at the very least, continue to ask yourself the question of what is more important: confidentiality or the verifiability of intelligence information. Truth may be a difficult term, but in the end it's the foundation for everything we have.

## THE CAST

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### Sebastian Blomberg – *Wolf*

#### Filmography (selection)

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
2019	Tribes of Europe (Netflix)	Philip Koch
	Bauhaus – A New Era (TV)	Lars Kraume
2018	Tatort – Zeit der Frösche (TV)	Markus Imboden
2017	Das Verschwinden (TV)	Hans-Christian Schmid
2016	Heart of Stone	Johannes Naber
2015	Wellness für Paare (TV)	Jan Georg Schütte
	The People vs. Fritz Bauer	Lars Kraume
2014	Age of Cannibals	Johannes Naber
2011	Hotel Lux	Leander Haußmann
2009	The Countess	Julie Delpy
2008	The Baader Meinhof Complex	Uli Edel
2007	Good Morning, Mr. Grothe	Lars Kraume
2004	Go for Zucker!	Dani Levy
2002	I'm the Father	Dani Levy
2001	What to do in Case of Fire	Gregor Schnitzler
2000	Anatomy	Stefan Ruzowitzky

### Dar Salim – *Rafid*

#### Filmography (selection)

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
2018	Kruger	Christoffer Boe
	Until we fall	Samanou Acheche Sahlstrøm
2016-2018	Spring Tide (TV)	Niklas Ohlson, Pontus Klänge et al.
2017	Jerks (TV)	Christian Ulmen
	Darkland	Fenar Ahmad
2015	Macho Man	Christof Wahl

2014	Tatort – Brothers (TV)	Florian Baxmeyer
2013	The Bridge Tod (TV)	Henrik Georgsson, Morten Arnfred et al.
2011	Game of Thrones (TV)	Alan Taylor, Daniel Minahan et al.
2010-2011	Borgen (TV)	Louise Friedberg, Mikkel Nørgaard et al.

### **Virginia Kull – *Leslie***

#### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
	The Big Bend	Brett Wagner
2019	NOS4A2 (TV)	Stefan Schwartz, Jeremy Webb et al.
2018	The Looming Tower (TV)	Craig Zisk, Michael Slovis et al.
	Mr. Mercedes (TV)	Jack Bender
2017	Twin Peaks (TV)	David Lynch
	Get Shorty (TV)	Colin Bucksey
2010	Boardwalk Empire	Timothy Van Patten, Brad Anderson et al.

### **Michael Wittenborn – *Retzlaff***

#### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
2020	Irgendwann ist auch mal gut (TV)	Christian Werner
2019	Wie gut ist deine Beziehung?	Ralf Westhoff
2019	Merz gegen Merz (TV)	Felix Stienz
2018	In My Room	Ulrich Köhler
2017	Unterwerfung (TV)	Titus Selge
	Happy Burnout	André Erkau
2016	Toni Erdmann	Maren Ade

2015	Wellness für Paare (TV) Dinky Sinky	Jan Georg Schütte Mareille Klein
2014	Wir sind die Neuen Stromberg – Der Film	Ralf Westhoff Arne Feldhusen
2011	Wer wenn nicht wir	Andres Veiel
2010	Crime Scene Cleaner (TV)	Arne Feldhusen
2008	Tatort – Herrenabend (TV) Outta Control (TV)	Matthias Tiefenbacher Nicole Weegmann

### **Thorsten Merten – *Schatz***

#### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
2019	Das letzte Wort (TV, 1. Staffel)	Aron Lehmann, Pola Beck
2017/2019	Babylon Berlin (TV, 3 Staffeln)	Tom Tykwer, Achim von Borries, Hendrik Handloegten
2018	Donbass Atlas	Sergey Loznitsa David Nawrath
2016	In Times of Fading Light	Matti Geschonneck
2015	Sedwitz (TV) Alki Alki Naked among Wolves (TV)	Paul Harather Axel Ranisch Philipp Kadelbach
2012	Kohlhaas oder die Verhältnismäßigkeit der Dinge	Aron Lehmann
2009	Gravity I've never been happier	Maximilian Erlenwein Alexander Adolph
2008	Novemberkind	Christian Schwochow
2002	Gun-Shy	Tito Tsintsadze
2001	Grill Point	Andreas Dresen
1992	Stilles Land	Andreas Dresen

## THE CREW

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### Johannes Naber – *Director, Writer*

Johannes Naber (1971) graduated in 1999 from the Filmakademie Baden-Württemberg with a degree in directing and documentary film making. In the following years, he made several, in part full-length, documentaries as well as pursued a successful career as a gaffer, before he directed his first feature film in 2009. *THE ALBANIAN* (2010) was awarded the Silver George of the international Moscow Film Festival in 2010 and the prestigious Max-Ophüls-Award in 2011 and went to receive a number of national and international awards, followed by a successful theatrical release in several countries. Naber's second feature film, *AGE OF CANNIBALS* (2014), premiered at the Berlinale in 2014. In addition to numerous other awards, the movie also received the Bronze German Film Award and was recognized by the German Film Critics Association as the "Best German Film 2015". In October 2016, his period adventure movie *THE COLD HEART* (2016), based on the fairy tale by Wilhelm Hauff, was released in theatres.

#### Filmography (selection)

	Title	
2020	CURVEBALL	Director, Writer
2016	Heart of Stone	Director, Writer
2014	Age of Cannibals	Director
2010	The Albanian	Director, Writer
2007	Der Zweifel (short film)	Director, Writer
2005	Anfassen Erlaubt	Director
1999	Popstar	Director

### Oliver Keidel – *Writer*

Oliver Keidel, born in 1968, is a screenwriter, script editor, editor for feature films and documentaries, and composer. In 1997 he graduated from the Baden-Württemberg Film Academy with a degree in film direction but mainly worked as a writer from then on. In 2006 he received the German Screenplay Award for his screenplay of *DR. ALEMÁN* (directed by Tom Schreiber), which saw its theatrical release in 2008. Keidel spent a large part of his life abroad, working on mainly native language projects in the U.S., Colombia, Ethiopia, and Spain among other places. Together with students from the Blue Nile Film Academy in Addis Ababa, in 2011-2012, he developed the feature film project *HORIZON BEAUTIFUL*, which was produced under the direction of Stefan Jäger and released in Swiss theatres in 2015. In addition to his love for writing and editing, Keidel is passionate about film music. His compositions are featured, among others, in the multi-award-winning, internationally released documentary *Ecocrimes*. Keidel's interest lies in looking past the borders of society. His topics stem from a globalized world in which the most different of people and cultures constantly misunderstand but also inspire each other.

#### Filmography (selection)

	Title	Directed by:
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber

2014	Scrappin'	Max Zähle
2013	Horizon Beautiful	Stefan Jäger
2010	La Nit que va morir l'Elvis	Oliver Keidel
2008	Dr. Alemán	Tom Schreiber

### **Sten Mende – Cinematographer (D.O.C.)**

After several years of working as a light technician and gaffer for film and television, Sten Mende studied cinematography at the Baden-Württemberg Film Academy from 1998 to 2003. Since 2000, Mende has been working as a freelance cinematographer and was involved in various TV and film productions, most recently FREE FALL (2013) by Stephan Lacant, *Under the Radar* (2015) by Elmar Fischer, TOO HARD TO HANDLE (2016) by Laura Lackmann, *Teufelsmoor* (2017) by Brigitte Bertele, and GUT GEGEN NORDWIND (2019) by Vanessa Jopp. Following THE ALBANIAN (2010), CURVEBALL is Sten Mende's second collaboration with director Johannes Naber.

### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
2019	Gut gegen Nordwind	Vanessa Jopp
2017	Teufelsmoor (TV)	Brigitte Bertele
	Rock my Heart	Hanno Olderdissen
2016	Too Hard to Handle	Laura Lackmann
2015	Under the Radar (TV)	Elmar Fischer
2013	Free Fall	Stephan Lacant
2012	Summer Outside	Friederike Jehn
2010	The Albanian	Johannes Naber
2009	The Welfare Worker	Lutz Konermann
2008	Weitertanzen	Friederike Jehn



## **Tamo Kunz – Production Design**

### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
2019	The Golden Glove	Fatih Akin
2018	Spielmacher	Timo Modersohn
2017	In the Fade	Fatih Akin
2016	Hands of a Mother	Florian Eichinger
2012	Partly Sunny	Marco Petry
2011	Resturlaub	Gregor Schnitzler
2009	Soul Kitchen	Fatih Akin
	13 Semesters	Frieder Wittich
2008	Sometime in August	Sebastian Schipper
2007	The Edge of Heaven	Fatih Akin
2004	Head-On	Fatih Akin
2001	Anam – My Mother	Buket Alakus

## **Amir Hamz – Producer (Bon Voyage Films)**

Amir Hamz studied Documentary Film, Political Science, and Journalism in Hamburg and London. From 2004 to 2010, he produced and directed several documentaries, music videos, and short films, including for German TV-station NDR, ZDF, and Arte, while also working as development producer for various companies in London, Hamburg, and Berlin. From 2011 to 2014, he worked as producer and head of development for Milbrook Pictures in Berlin and Zurich. During that time, he founded the screenwriter scholarship program “SCHOLARtreat” and the “Milbrook Writers Award” as part of the Hof Film Festival. Since then, he made several movies, including THE NIGHTMARE with Christian Springer and was one of the leading producers of the film adaptation of Martin Suter’s bestseller THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON (2015). Simultaneously with CURVEBALL, Amir Hamz and Bon Voyage worked on the documentary series *Fahri sucht das Glück* for German broadcaster ProSieben and shot the dramedy-series *Aus dem Tagebuch eines Uber-Fahrers* for streaming platform Joyn in Hamburg.

### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
	Tagebuch eines Uber-Fahrers (TV)	Julian Pörksen
2019	Fahri sucht das Glück (TV)	Heiko Lange / Kosei Takasaki
2015	The Nightmare	Achim Bornhak

Paradise

Sina Ataeian Dena

The Dark Side of the Moon

Stephan Rick

### **Christian Springer – Producer (*Bon Voyage Films*)**

Christian Springer has been involved in numerous successful films and mini-series productions for both movies and TV since the beginning of his career in 1994, including Stefan Ruzowitzky's *THE COUNTERFEITERS* (2007), which won the 2008 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Grobler's *LESSONS OF A DREAM*, starring Daniel Brühl, as well as *CHIKO* and *BLUTZBRÜDAZ* (Blood Brothers) by director Özgür Yildirim. As line producer and executive producer at Fatih Akin's production companies Corazon International and Bombero International, he worked on several award-winning films, among them *THE CUT*, *SOUL KITCHEN*, and *THE EDGE OF HEAVEN*, all directed by Fatih Akin. In addition to his role as producer of *THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON* and *THE NIGHTMARE*, Christian Springer also took part in the making of Christian Alvart's film version of *Tatort*, *TSCHILLER – OFF DUTY*, starring Til Schweiger, as line producer and the mini-series *Bad Banks* by Christian Schwochow as production manager. Simultaneously with *CURVEBALL*, Christian Springer and Bon Voyage worked on the documentary series *Fahri sucht das Glück* is currently being aired on German TV-station ProSieben and production of the series *Aus dem Tagebuch eines Uber-Fahrers* for streaming platform Joyn is underway.

### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	<i>CURVEBALL</i>	Johannes Naber
	<i>Tagebuch eines Uber-Fahrers</i> (TV)	Julian Pörksen
2019	<i>Fahri sucht das Glück</i> (TV)	Heiko Lange / Kosei Takasaki
2016-2017	<i>Bad Banks</i> (TV) (production manager)	Christian Schwochow
2016	<i>Tatort – Tschiller: Off Duty</i> (line producer)	Christian Alvart
2015	<i>The Nightmare</i>	Achim Bornhak
	<i>The Dark Side of the Moon</i> (Co-Producer)	Stephan Rick
2014	<i>The Cut</i> (Executive Producer)	Fatih Akin
2007	<i>The Edge of Heaven</i> (line producer)	Fatih Akin
	<i>The Counterfeiters</i> (production manager)	Stefan Ruzowitzky

## **Fahri Yardim – Producer (*Bon Voyage Films*)**

Fahri Yardim has become one of Germany's biggest movie stars, while his regular appearances as chief inspector Yalcin Gümmer on long-running German crime procedural *Tatort* alongside Til Schweiger made him a household name with German TV audiences. He has been Schweiger's partner on *Tatort – Hamburg* since 2013. Fahri Yardim proved his talents in Özgür Yildirim's film debut *CHIKO* (2008), a huge hit at the Berlin International Film Festival, and *ALMANYA – WELCOME TO GERMANY* (2010), another Berlinale favorite. Fans of Till Schweiger productions, meanwhile, will know him from *RABBIT WITHOUT EARS* (2007) and other German box-office successes.

The 36-year-old defies any kind of stereotype, his versatility evident in the wide range of roles he takes on: from *KEBAP CONNECTION* (2004), which received the German Film Award, to the TV-drama *MOGADISCHU* (2008), as well as the international film adaptation of Noah Gordon's best-selling novel *THE PHYSICIAN* (2013) alongside Sir Ben Kingsley and Stellan Skarsgård or the German hit series *Jerks* (2017-2019) with Christian Ulmen. In 2018, he co-starred in the Netflix series *Dogs of Berlin*.

Johannes Naber's *CURVEBALL* was his first work as producer. While working on *CURVEBALL*, Yardim and Bon Voyage produced the documentary series *Fahri sucht das Glück* for German broadcaster ProSieben and shot the dramedy-series *Aus dem Tagebuch eines Uber-Fahrers* for streaming platform Joyn in Hamburg.

### **Filmography (selection)**

	<b>Title</b>	<b>Directed by:</b>
2020	CURVEBALL	Johannes Naber
	Tagebuch eines Uber-Fahrers (TV)	Julian Pörksen
2019	Fahri sucht das Glück (TV)	Heiko Lange / Kosei Takasaki
	Tatort – Tschill Out (TV)	Eoin Moore
2017-2019	Jerks (TV)	Christian Ulmen
2018	Dogs of Berlin (2018)	Christian Alvert
2016	Tatort – Tschiller: Off Duty	Christian Alvert
2013	The Physician	Philipp Stölzl
2011	Almanya – Welcome to Germany	Yasemin Samdereli
2008	Chiko	Özgür Yildirim

### **Bon Voyage Films – Production Company**

Bon Voyage Films, with offices in Hamburg and Berlin, was founded in 2015 by director and producer Amir Hamz and production manager Christian Springer. The company produced several successful feature films such as *THE NIGHTMARE* (2015) and *PARADISE*. In spring 2017, Bon Voyage Films joined the creative network of Munich based All3Media Group and added famous German actor Fahri Yardim as a producer to the company ranks.

In 2019, the company produced the feature film *CURVEBALL* by director Johannes Naber. At the same time, they developed and shot the six-part series *Aus dem Tagebuch eines Uber-Fahrers* for the German streaming platform Joyn and the documentary series *Fahri sucht das Glück* for Pro Sieben.

Bon Voyage Films has committed itself to working with visionary writers and filmmakers and telling stories that inspire, challenge, and deeply move the audience. The company's focus lies in feature films and serial formats, as well as large-scale documentaries.

## CAST

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Wolf	Sebastian Blomberg
Rafid	Dar Salim
Leslie	Virginia Kull
Retzlaff	Michael Wittenborn
Schatz	Thorsten Merten
Meg	Franziska Brandmeier
Analyst Heiner	Dirk Böhling
Analyst Dieter	Marius Borghoff
Interpreter	Omar Almarsoomi
John	Gregory Hellenkamp
Jim	Jeff Burrell
Jerry	Bob Snowman
BND Officer	Oli Bigalke
Man in Suit	Marcus Calvin
Man in Uniform	Michael Davies
Bassam	David A. Hamade
Yaver	Georg Paluza
Aisha	Zainab Alsawah
Receptionist	Jule Torhorst

## CREW

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Director	Johannes Naber
Screenplay	Johannes Naber, Oliver Keidel
Producers	Amir Hamz, Christian Springer, Fahri Yardim
Production Company	Bon Voyage Films
in Co-Production with	ARRI Media Productions (Antonio Exacoustos, Joseph M'Barek) SWR (federführend Stefanie Groß, Manfred Hattendorf) ARTE (Uta Cappel) NDR (Eric Fiedler, Thomas Schreiber) BR (Cornelius Conrad)
Production Management	Dorissa Berninger
Cinematography	Sten Mende
Production Design	Tamo Kunz
Costume	Juliane Meier, Christian Röhrs
Make-up	Stefanie Gredig, Katrin Sondermann
Editing	Anne Jünemann
Sound	André Zacher
Casting	Suse Marquardt
Funded by	BKM Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien DFFF Deutscher Filmförderfonds FFA Filmförderungsanstalt Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein MFG Medien- und Filmgesellschaft Baden-Württemberg
Filming Locations	Baden-Württemberg, Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein, Berlin, Marokko
Global Distribution	ARRI Media International

## **TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS**

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Country: Germany, 2020

Aspect Ratio: 1:1,85

Sound Mix: Dolby 5.1

Runtime: 108 min.