

Caroline **PETERS**

Proschat **MADANI**

WHAT A FEELING

A Film by **Kat Rohrer**



PRAHER**FILM**

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WHAT A FEELING

A Film by Kat Rohrer
with Caroline Peters and Proschat Madani

Austria | 2024 | 110 min

BFI Flare: London LGBTQIA+ Film Festival
March 13-24, 2024

WORLD PREMIERE

Diagonale Festival of Austrian Film
April 4-9, 2024

Austrian Theatrical Release
Filmladen Filmverleih
April 19, 2024

Production

Praherfilm

Daniela Praher
Schleifmühlgasse 2/11
A-1040 Wien
+43 650 34 17 460
daniela@praherfilm.at
www.praherfilm.at

Co-Production

NGF Geyrhalterfilm

Michael Kitzberger
Hildebrandgasse 26
A-1180 Wien
+43 1 403 01 62/15
office@geyrhalterfilm.at
www.geyrhalterfilm.com

Press

IJK | presse + marketing

Ines Kaizik-Kratzmüller
Lerchenfelderstraße 88/26
A-1080 Wien
+43 699 12 64 13 47
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WHAT A FEELING

Logline

Love between cultures and conventions: There is no straight path for Marie Theres (Caroline Peters) and Fa (Proschat Madani)! A heartfelt and clever romantic comedy about two middle aged women who refuse to be pushed to the sideline of life.

Synopsis

Marie Theres (Caroline Peters), a successful doctor, had special plans for her 20th wedding anniversary. Did her husband Alexander (Heikko Deutschmann) really have to break up with her that evening? Yes, he had to. Not only did he have different ideas about the evening but also about his whole life: he wants to be happier, he wants to be free, he does not want Marie Therese in his life anymore. As a result of this unpleasant turn of events, Marie Theres does what any sensible woman in her position would do: she goes for a drink, stumbles into Bigi's (Barbara Spitz) queer bar and meets Fa (Proschat Madani).

Fa is fun-loving, spontaneous and unattached. She is open about her love life. Even though the very inhibited doctor isn't Fa's type, she still takes Marie Theres home after a boozy evening. Marie Theres however is too drunk to remember what they did or did not do.

As their worlds collide, feelings emerge but nothing is simple. There is no straight path for Marie Theres and Fa!



WHAT A FEELING

AT | 2024 | 110 min

OV/EN subtitles

Written and Directed by	Kat Rohrer
Cinematography	Michael Schindegger
Editing	Ruth Schönege
Sound	Theda Schifferdecker
Composer	Martin Gellner
Set Decoration	Hubert Klausner, Teresa Prothmann
Costume Design	Constanza Meza-Lopehandia
Make up	Hannah Fischleder, Jana Stelter
Casting	Marion Rossmann
Sound Editors	Victoria Grohs, Flora Rajakowitsch
Sound Mixing	Alexander Koller
Grading	Andi Winter
Production Manager	Gerhard Hannak
Line Producer	Michael Kitzberger
Producer	Daniela Praher
Co-producers	Michael Kitzberger, Wolfgang Widerhofer, Markus Glaser, Nikolaus Geyrhalter
Production	Praherfilm
Co-Production	NGF Geyrhalterfilm

with

Caroline Peters, Proschat Madani, Anton Noori, Gohar Nurbachs, Nicole Ansari-Cox, Allegra Tinnefeld, Heikko Deutschmann, Rafael Haider, Barbara Spitz, Petra Morzé, Joseph Lorenz, Ines Kratzmueller, Adriane Gradziel and others.

supported by

ÖFI (Austrian Film Institute)

ÖFI+ (Austrian Film Institute plus)

ORF Film/Fernseh-Abkommen

FFW (Vienna Film Fund)

Land Niederösterreich Kultur (Lower Austria Cultural Department)

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In conversation with Kat Rohrer – Austrian Film Institute

„Our lives are more diverse than they are portrayed in the movies“

If, like filmmaker Kat Rohrer, you've lived in New York for twenty years after growing up in Vienna, you have a hard time accepting what type of questions a queer story can raise in Austria. Her comedy *WHAT A FEELING* originated from a desire for hilarity and a desire for a more courageous approach to life outside the mold. In the daily hustle to fit in, two women accidentally run into each other and together they take a new direction.

If you want to title the script of *WHAT A FEELING* with a theme, then I would choose diversity: The story touches on issues such as sexual orientation, geographic, cultural or social origin, age. Could diversity be described as the sole focus of this story?

KAT ROHRER: Yes, it's also my personal focus. I'm convinced that our lives are much more diverse than they are often portrayed in the movies. I personally have a lot of diverse friends. I certainly didn't sit down at the desk with the intention to write a story as diverse as possible. It was, for example, clear from the very beginning that I wanted to work with Proschat Madani, a very good friend of mine. I've also known her family for decades and through her and working with her, the Iranian part of the story came up. And I definitely wanted to tell a queer story, because our stories are generally underrepresented in cinema. It was important to me to show the question of queer acceptance or lack thereof through the different generations. It's very different when you come out at 50, or when you do it today under 20 or 30. It's a very different experience. I know that firsthand. For 16-17 year olds it's no longer an issue at all, between 20 and 30 it's easier, for everyone above that age there are different levels of difficulty. A lot of people don't realize that. Today there is certainly more conversation about the queer experience but for many it's still connected with a difficult process, even if society has changed a bit. *WHAT A FEELING* touches on a lot of family aspects and cultural components.

The title *WHAT A FEELING* draws you immediately on an emotional level. Was the desire to tell a real emotional story also your goal?

KAT ROHRER: I wanted to tell a funny and emotional story. I wrote this script during the pandemic. Before that I was working on another script. At some point my producer, Daniela Praher, asked me if I wanted to continue writing this dramatic and heavy material during this already difficult time. My answer was „no.“ I had the feeling that on the one hand we all needed more comedy, on the other I myself also needed something to laugh about. I already had the basis of an idea and so I just wanted to try my hand at comedy. My goal is for people to leave the film feeling happy and upbeat. The world situation has become so gloomy that people like to go to the movies to be entertained.

Comedy is not the easiest genre, it thrives on tensions and contrasts. How did your mismatched couple take shape?

KAT ROHRER: I have to backtrack a bit. I myself grew up in Vienna and then lived in New York for 20 years. Being a foreigner or not really fitting in was always a part of my life. I went to a conservative private school in Vienna, and although I liked it, I didn't really fit in. Then I was in New York, where as an European I also was different, having grown up in a different culture. I had to learn, for example, that friendships are conducted differently there than here. It was important for me to portray people in my story who live in the Viennese society but never really fit in. And I wanted to have two different characters at the center: one who knows who she is but can't tell the people closest to her (albeit for reasons she has forced upon herself), and the other who comes from the outside, has the „right“ look to fit in, but then doesn't because of a cultural and also subtle linguistic difference.

With Proschat Madani and Caroline Peters, you chose two actresses who bring something of their own history to the role. Did they also inspire your characters?

KAT ROHRER: Proschat, who plays the role of Fa, definitely. A lot of Fa's backstory is based on Proschat's family history. She read the script over and over again, not just for content. Proschat is also a good story editor, and she kept breaking the book down and asking me questions. That left me being frustrated and angry. Finally I had to admit that she was right. Then I rewrote it. I'm lucky that many of the actors I've cast now are good friends of mine. We did table reads very early on, in which Proschat, Barbara Spitz (who plays Bigi) and Ines Kratzmüller (who plays Susanne) took part. This helped me to see the different (age) perspectives. I have no way of knowing Barbara's perspective, who is over 60, when it comes to her coming out, or that of anyone who fled from Iran to Vienna in the seventies, which at the time wasn't a city that was particularly cosmopolitan or diverse. I really needed that input. When I was writing, I always had Caroline Peters in mind for Marie Theres, but I didn't know her and didn't know if she would get involved. So we sent her the script. She immediately expressed interest but wanted to meet me first. It was a good fit between the three of us, but there was still the important question, which is crucial in any romantic comedy. Did Proschat and Caroline have chemistry? Proschat could not be recast since I wrote the story for her. So the three of us started meeting and found that we shared the same sense of humor and most importantly that there was chemistry between the two of them.

You are someone who, as a native Viennese, knows Vienna very well from the inside, but also has a view from the outside due to your long time in New York. Vienna and its peculiarities are also a theme of the film. What effect does it have when you have this double view of a place?

KAT ROHRER: My internal view is determined by the time in which I grew up. As I said, I went to a private school where there is a certain socioeconomic group of people. When I was 18, I went to the U.S., first for a gap year, then back again to Austria and then I left again to study in NYC. Vienna is a beautiful city but the people can sometimes be difficult. When I was stuck here for two years due to the pandemic, I realized how much we lag behind in some social understanding of certain issues,

especially when it comes to queer topics. If you live in a certain bubble there is a lot of understanding and openness but when you leave that bubble in the age category of 40/50 there is still a lot of catching up that needs to be done. I had to have conversations here in Vienna and to answer questions that I couldn't imagine still being relevant. For example, the question arose about the character of Marie Theres: If she was married and is now with a woman, is she a lesbian now? Was she always a lesbian? The answer is of course „no“, she's just fallen in love with a woman. There are shades of queerness. And I can say that was one of the more innocent questions. There were others. Or I think of the use of language when people say to me: Let's go to YOUR bars. That's just a nuance, it conveys a you and a we. A norm and the other. People don't mean it in a derogatory way, but you have to make them aware of it. When I lived in New York, I can say the least interesting thing about me was that I am gay. The most interesting thing was that I am from Austria. And here in Vienna, the most interesting thing is who I'm sleeping with. There is a lot of catching up to do, also in storytelling. It's getting better, but it's still not as brave as in other countries.

There were two very successful Austrian films last year with stories of homosexual men. Do you feel it's something else again to share homosexual stories of women?

KAT ROHRER: Yes, I think so. In the process of writing the script and promoting it, I realized through feedback from outside that things which are quite logical to me, living in this world, are not comprehensible to others. I realized that I had to explain basic concepts. For example, for the character of Fa the feedback was: She's like a man because she has many lovers, that renders her unlikable. I asked myself, why am I getting this question? Is everyone afraid of a woman's free sexuality? Why should I hide it? She is not fooling anyone, she's not lying to anyone, they are all consenting adults. She just has several lovers and is open about it. Why are they saying she is like a man? I can only say: no, she is not. There were also suggestions to tell the story in a completely different way, clearly from a male heterosexual perspective. I had to counter that vehemently. The reason why Fa has so many affairs is that the moment she opens up, develops feelings and enters into a relationship, the issue of coming out will inevitably come up sooner or later. Fa wants to avoid that at all costs, protecting herself.

The story has very current references, be it the events in Iran, be it also the attitude of Marie Theres' adolescent daughter.

KAT ROHRER: With a main character who has Iranian roots, you can't leave out what's going on in Iran right now. These are events that are happening in a homeland from which Fa's family has emigrated. They are observing the developments there, hoping to return one day. Anna, Marie Theres' daughter, also has an important role. She gives her mother the feeling that she is okay, experiencing what she is at that moment. At the same time Anna is also struggling to find her own voice and is rebelling against everything. At her age she just needs that. Even though her rebellion is from within the comfort zone of the privilege and security of a western European country. Anna's view helps Marie Theres to understand herself. We all believe that coming out is no big deal anymore. To anyone who believes that I can only say: It always is a big deal. But it is much more difficult for people who come from a cultural background where homosexuality is not accepted at all. That doesn't have to be a migrant Muslim family, that can be in Austria also one with a strict Catholic or other religious background. Living this hidden life is insanely exhausting.

You studied film in the U.S. and certainly bring a different approach to storytelling. What of this flows into WHAT A FEELING?

KAT ROHRER: It's definitely an Anglo-American approach, which means slightly different way of storytelling. WHAT A FEELING is not an arthouse film, but an entertaining people-pleaser film. It has no other aspiration than to tell a story that touches people emotionally. Not that arthouse doesn't do that, I'm not saying conversely that my film doesn't challenge the intellect. WHAT A FEELING is supposed to be a feel-good movie.

Are there also differences in the writing or shooting process?

KAT ROHRER: Writing is an exhausting process for me, and by that I don't mean the creative part at all, but typing per se, which is made more difficult by my dyslexia. I find it easier to write in English than in German, which is such a cumbersome language with long words. I translated the script into English for a screenwriting workshop. English is the easier language, which allows wit and humor to flow more easily, especially in dialogue. For the submissions, I then translated it back into German, and I have to say, that made an incredible difference. With the translation into another language and the revision that goes with it, it becomes very clear when something doesn't work. It was a tedious process, but I think from now on I'll always do it that way. During the shoot, we ran the set the American way, with first, second and third AD. The biggest difference is that the AD department is an independent department. They create the shooting schedule, coordinate actors, structure the shooting days and coordinate with the other departments. I decided this with my assistant director Susanne Novotny because she also prefers to work this way. I don't see a big difference; to me it means a different chain of communication. Since I've also produced most of my previous films, I have a good sense of where money can be saved and I'm very solution-oriented. The big thing is getting the money to finance the film, all the other problems that come up as a result of making the film are luxury problems that just need solving. You have to be flexible. The film is produced by Praherfilm, with Daniela Praher at the helm with a fresh female approach. She partnered with NGF Geyrhalterfilm, who are contributing their many years of expertise to the project, making this the perfect combination for WHAT A FEELING.

Interview by Karin Schiefer

Director/Writer
KAT ROHRER

FILMOGRAPHY (excerpt)

- 2024 **What a Feeling** – Writer, Director (Feature)
- 2021 **Roads Not Taken** – Writer, Director (short)
- Official Selection:
 2022 London International Short Film Festival (Audience Award Winner)
 2022 New York International Shorts Film Festival
 2022 San Diego International Film Festival
 2022 LA Femme International Film Festival
 2023 Long Island International Film Expo – LIIFE (2023 LIIFE Best Director)
 2023 Queer Shorts Vienna
- 2014 **The Urn** – Writer, Director, Producer (Digital, short)
- 2013 **Mother** – Producer (Digital, short)
- 2010 **Wantless** – Producer, Director (Digital, short)
- Official Selection:
 2011 Hamptons Film Festival
- 2006 **Absolute Calm** – Producer (16mm short)
- 2005 **Rachmaninov** – Producer (16mm short)
- 2004/2005 **Beach Lane Project** – Co-Producer, DP (16mm short)
- 2003/2004 **The Search** – Writer, Director, Producer (16mm short)
- Official Selection: 2005 LA Femme Film Festival (Winner Best Short)
 2005 West Chester International Film Festival
 2005 Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival
 2006 Bethel International Film Festival
 International Grants: Austrian Ministry of Culture, Vienna Film Fund,
 Cine Culture Carinthia Film Fund, Austrian Ministry of Education Film Fund
 National Grants: William C. Arkeel Memorial Fund, School of Visual Arts Post Production Grant

DOCUMENTARY WORK

- 2019-ongoing **Our Children**, Feature length documentary
 Producer
- 2014-2017. **Back to the Fatherland**, Feature length documentary
 Producer, Director
- Official Selection: 2017 Haifa International Film Festival
 2017 Vienna Jewish Film Festival
 2018 Cinema Du Israelien de Paris
 2018 Diagonale Film Festival
 2018 Washington Jewish Film Festival
 2018 Seret Film Festival, Berlin
 2019 Chicago Film Festival of Israeli Film

- 2010-on going **The Ballin-Scheidt Family Story** (working title),
feature length documentary hybrid
Producer, Director, Researcher
- 2009-2012 **80 years Roland Foods - The Story behind the company** (working title),
feature length documentary
Producer, Director, Researcher
- 2008-2013 **The Silent Truth**, feature length documentary, Midtown Films,
Directed by Joan Brooker-Marks
Production Coordinator
- 2005-2009 **Fatal Promises**, feature length documentary,
Director, Producer, Editor
Official Selection: 2009 This Human World Film Festival
2010 Thessaloniki Documentary Film Festival
2010 Anti-Human Trafficking Film Festival, Boston
2011 United Nations Association Film Festival
- 2008 **Through our children's eyes**, short promotional documentary for NGO
Director, Producer
- 2007 **Dreams of Freedom**, short promotional documentary for NGO,
Director, Producer, DP, Editor
- 2005-2006 **Larry Flynt - the right to be left alone**, feature length documentary
Cinematographer
Midtown Films, Directed by Joan Brooker-Marks
Official Selection of: 2007 Full Frame Film Festival,
2007 Doku Week
2007 IDFA, Amsterdam
- 2003 **Dancing at the Workman's Circle**, Documentary short,
Director, Producer, DP, Editor

EDUCATION

- 2000-2004 **Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film - School of Visual Arts, New York, N.Y.**
Graduated with honors
Rhodes Family Award for Outstanding Achievement
- 1999 **New York Film Academy**

WEBSITE www.rohrer.tv

Production

PRAHERFILM

Daniela Praher studied journalism, film sciences and audio-visual media design at the University of Vienna and at the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

2011 she founded PRAHERFILM. The Vienna based company produces documentaries and fiction on an international level. Daniela Praher is board member of „dok.at - Association of Austrian Documentary Filmmakers“, „Die Produzent*innen“ and „Film Fatal“ and member of „FC Gloria - Women, Networking, Film“ and „Österreichischer Filmpreis“.

www.praherfilm.at

FILMOGRAPHY

What a Feeling

A 2024 / Feature / 110 min / Director: Kat Rohrer
in co-production with NGF Geyrhalterfilm

One Family – Two Worlds

A 2023 / Documentary / 52 min / Director: Peter Mahler

Fiaker – Vienna’s Living Tradition

A 2022 / Documentary / 52 min / Director: Ulli Gladik

Roads not taken

A 2021 / Feature / 19 min / Director: Kat Rohrer

Ordinary Creatures

A 2020 / Feature / 75 min / Director: Thomas Marschall

Blue Magic – 20 years Viagra

A 2020 / Documentary / 85 min / Director: Josef Pallwein-Prettner
in co-production with SINE LEGE FILM

Superman is a refugee

A 2020 / Documentary / 11 min / Director: Juliana Neuhuber

Punch Line

A 2016 / Documentary / 53 min / Director: Kati Zambito

Private Revolutions – Young, Female, Egyptian

A 2014 / Documentary / 98 min & 52 min / Director: Alexandra Schneider

Sweat

A 2014 / Feature / 30 min / Director: Iris Blauensteiner

Co-Production NGF GEYRHALTERFILM

NGF Geyrhalterfilm is an award-winning production company based in Vienna with over 100 films produced since 1994 (documentaries, feature films and documentary series for cinema and TV/streaming). They have been screened in competitions in Cannes, Berlinale, San Sebastian, Amsterdam, Toronto, Sundance, a.o., and distributed worldwide; ranging in form and content from radical arthouse to family entertainment; committed to local engagement and global questions.

www.geyrhalterfilm.com

FILMOGRAPHY (excerpts)

- 2024 **What a Feeling** (in coprod. with Praherfilm)
A + fiction + 110 min. + Director: Kat Rohrer
- 2023 **Stillstand / The Standstill**
A + doc + 137 min. + Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter
- 2023 **Neue Geschichten vom Franz / New Tales of Franz**
A/D + fiction + 72 min. + Director: Johannes Schmid
- 2023 **Feminism WTF** (in coprod. with La Banda Film)
A + doc + 90 min. + Director: Katharina Mückstein
- 2022 **Matter Out of Place**
A + doc + 106 min. + Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter
- 2022 **Breaking the Ice**
A + fiction + 102 min. + Director: Clara Stern
- 2022 **Geschichten vom Franz / Tales of Franz**
A/D + fiction + 78 min. + Director: Johannes Schmid
- 2018 **L'Animale**
A + fiction + 96 min. + Director: Katharina Mückstein
- 2017 **Licht / Mademoiselle Paradis**
A/D + doc + 97 min. + Director: Barbara Albert
- 2016 **Homo Sapiens**
A + doc + 94 min. + Director: Nikolaus Geyrhalter
- 2015 **The Visit**
DK/A/IRL/FIN/NOR + doc + 90 min. + Director: Michael Madsen
- 2013 **Master of the Universe**
D/A + doc + 88 min. + Director: Marc Bauder
- 2011 **Anfang 80 / Coming of Age**
A + fiction + 90 min. + Directors: Sabine Hiebler & Gerhard Ertl
- 2011 **Michael**
A + fiction + 96 min. + Director: Markus Schleizer
- 2009 **Der Räuber / The Robber**
A/D + fiction + 96 min. + Director: Benjamin Heisenberg