

# FAMILY DINNER

A Horror Thriller  
by Peter Hengl



Press Kit  
18 Apr 2022



*Overweight and insecure, Simi spends Easter weekend with her famous nutritionist aunt. The hope is that it'll help her get on a healthier track, but as the aunt's family's icy dynamics and an increasingly malevolent atmosphere leave Simi feeling uneasy, weight isn't the only thing she's about to lose.*

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# SYNOPSIS

Tired of feeling down about her weight, plus-sized 15-year-old Simi heads to her aunt Claudia's house for Easter weekend. Claudia is a popular nutritionist who's written best-selling health books, so for Simi, spending a few days together could help change her diet and inspire weight loss. What should've been a nice holiday weekend with family, however, quickly reveals itself to be anything but. Simi's cousin, Filipp, is curiously hostile towards her, while Filipp's stepdad, Stefan, is curiously the opposite towards Simi, all while Claudia's dietary guidance verges on becoming overly militant. What's causing everyone to act so strangely and aggressively? The answers are even worse than Simi's worst nightmares.

# FACTS

**Actors:**

Claudia: Pia Hierzegger

Simi: Nina Katlein

Stefan: Michael Pink

Filipp: Alexander Sladek

**Written and directed by:** Peter Hengl

**Producer:** Lola Basara

**Coproducers:** Alexander Glehr, Johanna Scherz

**Executive Producer:** Ant Timpson, Annick Mahnert

**Director of Photography:** Gabriel Krajanek

**Editor:** Sebastian Schreiner

**Set Designer:** Pia Jaros

**Costumes:** Marlene Pleyl

**Make-Up:** Alexandra Knopp

**Sound Recordist:** Theda Schifferdecker

**Sound Design:** Lenja Gathmann

**Original Music:** Peter Kutin

**Casting Director:** Marion Rossmann

**Language:** German (English Subtitles)

**Shooting location:** Austria (Lower Austria, Vienna)

**Shooting period:** March and April 2021

**Shooting duration:** 25 days

**Format:** Digital (DCP 4K), 1:1,66

**Budget:** ca 1,5 M Euro

**Financed by:** Austrian Film Institute, Filmfonds Wien, ORF, FISA, Lower Austria Film Commission

Developed with support of the European Genre Forum 2017 Genre Programme.

**Produced by** Capra Film

**Co-produced by** Film AG

**US Distribution:** XYZ Films

**Intl Distribution:** WTFilms

# BACKGROUND

*FAMILY DINNER will have its official world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival 2022.*

FAMILY DINNER is the first feature film by director Peter Hengl and producer Lola Basara.

Lola and Peter are a married couple - they started working together while studying at the Vienna Film Academy, one of the 20 best international film schools according to the Hollywood Reporter in 2021. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/movies/movie-news/2021-best-international-film-schools-1234995133/>

Peter studied under professors like Michael Haneke (Oscar Best Foreign Film 2013) and Götz Spielmann (nominated for Oscar for Best Foreign Film 2009)

FAMILY DINNER is the first production of their company Capra Film. Lola founded the company while studying, Peter Hengl and Marc Schlegel joined in 2020 as partners.

FAMILY DINNER also features the first appearances in a feature film of talented young actors Nina Katlein (Simi) and Alexander Sladek (Filipp).

Pia Hierzegger (Claudia) is a well known actress in Austria and starred in films like THE GROUND BENEATH MY FEET by Marie Kreutzer (Berlinale 2019), WILDE MAUS by Josef Hader (Berlinale 2017).

FAMILY DINNER was also joined by well-known genre specialists Ant Timpson and Annick Mahnert.

Ant Timpson is the director of COME TO DADDY (Tribeca 2019) and producer of TURBO KID (Sundance 2015) and many more.

Annick Mahnert is the producer of films such as 78/52 (Sundance 2017), Memory: The Origin of Alien (Sundance 2019), Leap of Faith: William Friedkin on the Exorcist (Venice Film Festival 2019), Huachiculero (Tribeca 2019).

# INTERVIEWS

# PIA HIERZEGGER

## „CLAUDIA“

**Who do you play in the film and how would you describe your role?**

I play the mother who doesn't want to lose control of her son. She seeks solutions in the knowledge of ancient cultures and she is addicted to recognition.

**What do you like about Claudia? What attracted you to take on this role?**

I share their love for good food. Otherwise I don't like much about her. I think she'd get on my nerves. But I try to understand the consistency with which she pursues things and to think into her esoteric explanation of the world. At the moment you can see that there are quite a number of people like this. In horror films they kill each other, in real life they take to the streets and scream loudly. But one thing unites them, it is not about others but only about themselves and they believe that they are the bearers of the only truth.

**What is the biggest challenge in the character Claudia and how did you prepare for it?**

I was only able to prepare briefly because I got to this film late. The challenge for me is not to reveal right from the start whether Claudia is to be trusted or not and not to emphasize the horror



(c) Felix Vratny

genre in every scene while playing. I try to see every situation from Claudia's point of view and the rest will hopefully happen while shooting with my colleagues.

**In the film you play a nutrition expert who loves cooking. Are you also nutrition-conscious in your private life and do you like to cook?**

I like to cook, but not always well. I like to eat, but I've gotten a little complicated over the years. Few carbohydrates, meat only in exceptional situations, small portions. But if the situation is right, I then eat everything and a lot. I've now read a recipe in the script called Shakshuka, that interests me. I also sometimes bake bread, even before Corona started.

### **What is your favourite meal?**

I don't really have a favorite food. I like vegetables, I like salad. Parmigiana is very popular with me right now. But I think it always depends on who and in what situation I eat.

### **Do you watch horror movies privately? If so, which movies do you like? If not, why not?**

As a teenager, I loved watching horror films. I remember "The Omen" and "The Exorcist", but the most impressive was "The Shining." Jack Nicholson was one of my favorite actors for a long time and I watched films like "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest", "Easy Rider" or "Chinatown" and got away from horror films a bit.

## **Filmography Pia Hierzegger**

### **Awards**

2020 Austrian Film Award for the best female supporting actor in „Der Boden unter den Füßen“  
2019 Nominated for German Acting Award as best Actress in a comedy for „Der Tatortreiniger: Currywurst“

### **Theatrical (selection)**

2019 Risiken & Nebenwirkungen, Director: Michael Kreihsl  
2018 Womit haben wir das verdient?, Director: Eva Spreitzhofer  
2017 Der Boden unter den Füßen, Director: Marie Kreutzer  
2015 Hotel Rock'n'Roll, Director: Helmut Köpping, Michael Ostrowski  
2015 Wilde Maus, Director: Josef Hader  
2015 Was hat uns bloß so ruiniert, Director: Marie Kreutzer

### **TV (selection)**

2019 Weidmannsdank, Director: Daniel Prochaska, ZDF/ORF  
2019 Die Toten vom Bodensee: Fluch aus der Tiefe, Director: Michael Schneider, ZDF  
2018 Der Tatortreiniger, Director: Arne Feldhusen, NDR  
2016 Die Notlüge Director: Marie Kreutzer, ORF/SWR  
2014 Vier Frauen und ein Todesfall, Director: Wolfgang Murnberger, ORF/ARD  
2012 Schnell ermittelt, Director: Michi Riebl, ORF  
2010 Aufschneider, Director: David Schalko, ORF/arte

# NINA KATLEIN

## „SIMI“

### **How did you prepare for the shooting?**

Family Dinner is my first feature film. I prepared myself together with Peter, our acting coach Jakob Fischer and Alexander Sladek. We had rehearsals beforehand and worked through the entire book and rehearsed scenes. Later we rehearsed together with Pia and Michael. That was a very intensive preparation.

### **How would you describe your role?**

I believe that Simone is a relatively insecure person, which is also due to the fact that she is overweight and therefore has no self-confidence. That's why she wants to lose weight and that's why she goes to see her aunt. I think she is definitely not happy with her body. She would also gain confidence if she were thinner. She has no confidence at the moment.

### **What do you like about this role? What attracted you to apply for this role?**

I think it's very cool about the film that a girl who is a little bigger gets a leading role because that's rarely the case. Usually lead roles are cast with people who adhere to traditional beauty standards.

### **Family Dinner is a lot about ideals of beauty and self-**



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### **perception. How important are these topics to you? Is there a message this film is supposed to convey?**

I don't know if there really is a message about body and beauty in the film, but it definitely covers it. Just because of Simi's weight-loss efforts and the fact that Claudia is a nutritionist, it is a present topic in the film. I think this topic affects each of us in some way: advertising, fashion - everything has to do with it. I've never conformed to today's ideal of beauty, but I think it's important that you create an ideal of beauty for yourself and that you are also satisfied if you are not super slim.

### **What is your favourite meal?**

I really enjoy eating Italian. My very favorite dish is sheep's cheese spaghetti. Just spaghetti with a feta herbal sauce. I've loved that since childhood.

# MICHAEL PINK

## „STEFAN“

### ***Who do you play in the film and how would you describe your role?***

I play Stefan, who is very in love with his wife. He is Claudia's new husband and Philipp's stepfather. Stefan is / was a successful business man at an IT company in Vienna, who has surrendered to Thoreau's philosophy and wants to find himself as a person. To create with his hands, to feel nature and body. Reduce the world back to what it is: nature. To relive these simple laws without distraction is his goal. His demands on the others are at least as tough and strict as those on himself. His choleric manner does not help Philipp in particular to open up to Stefan's world.

### ***What do you like about Stefan? What attracted you to take on this role?***

What appealed to me most was the great distance between Stefan's person and my own. To fill this gap and to go on this journey in order to be able to understand this figure and to represent it in a comprehensible manner. The search for the why. Where could his actions come from and what does he want, an exciting path - and that is also what I like most about Stefan: That he made me think, empathize and change perspective (without wanting to go his own way!).



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### ***What is the biggest challenge in the character Stefan and how did you prepare for it?***

First: the philosophy he represents. Why does he do all this, what is his drive? To dive into the psychology of this character. To find the „why“ in everyday life. And second: the physical preparation. I exercise every day and avoid sugar. For me as a biscuit lover, it's pretty exhausting!

### ***Stefan is a very sporty man. Did you have to prepare yourself a lot or are you so sporty in your private life?***

If it says so in the script, I prepare accordingly in advance. Training, but also growing your hair and beard was part of it - just like the internal preparation, the external must also fit the role. Stefan is

about survival of the fittest, not bodybuilding. I try to comply with that. I'm basically athletic, but only to feel good about myself and not in such a consistent manner.

### **What is your favourite meal?**

Vegetable curry and definitely something sweet afterwards.

### **Do you watch horror movies privately? If so, which movies do you like? If not, why not?**

I like good films, the genre is then rather secondary. But I don't have a special favorite that deserves to be mentioned here explicitly.

## **Filmography Michael Pink**

### **Awards (Selection)**

- 2021 Austrian Film Award [at], Best male supporting actor (nominated) in „Das schaurige Haus“
- 2020 Actors Awards Los Angeles - Best Ensemble „Wienerland“
- 2019 Jelly Film Festival [us], Best Actor for „Fucking Drama“
- 2018 Austrian Film Award [at], best male supporting actor (nominated) in „Die beste aller Welten“
- 2018 Discover Film Awards [uk], Best Actor for „Fucking Drama“

### **Theatrical (selection)**

- 2021 Family Dinner, main, D: Peter Hengl
- 2021 Subtext, supporting, D: Sophie Linnenbaum
- 2020 Das schaurige Haus, supporting, D: Daniel Prochaska
- 2018 Berlin, I Love You, supporting
- 2017 Die beste aller Welten, supporting, D: Adrian Goiginger
- 2014 The Voices, supporting, D: Marjane Satrapi
- 2012 James Bond 007 - Skyfall, supporting, D: Sam Mendes

### **TV (selection)**

- 2021 Glauben, supporting, series, TVNOW, VOX, D: Daniel Prochaska
- 2021 Wilsberg - Ungebetene Gäste, main, TV movie series, ZDF, D: Martin Enlen
- 2021 Todesurteil - Nemez und Sneijder ermitteln, supporting, TV movie series, ProSieben, SAT.1, D: Christopher Schier
- 2020 Tatort - Unten, TV movie series, ORF, D: Daniel Prochaska
- 2020 Landkrimi - Waidmannsdank, supporting, TV movie series, ORF, ZDF, D: Daniel Prochaska
- 2019 Now or Never, main, TV movie, SWR, D: Gerd Schneider
- 2015 Wienerland, main, series pilot, D: Jan Woletz

# ALEXANDER SLADEK

## „FILIPP“

**Who do you play in the film and how would you describe your role?**

I play Filipp, Simi's cousin. When you get to know him, you immediately notice that something is wrong with him. He comes across as aggressive and absent-minded, and he is not a pleasant companion. But if you got to know him better, you would notice that he is slowly but surely opening up to you. But his mother doesn't allow that to happen.

**What do you like about this role? What attracted you to apply for this role?**

What I like about Filipp is that he is a very complex character. He is treated like a small child by his mother and constantly criticized by his stepfather. These two extreme influences disturb him and trigger his frustration. I also have a lot of fun playing someone who is so different from me.

**Family Dinner is your first feature film. How did you prepare for the shooting?**

We rehearsed for many days and dealt intensively with our roles. We discussed the motivations of each person in detail in each scene. That really helped me put myself in the story. Since I had next to no experience in front of the camera, it was extremely helpful for me to



(c) Felix Vratny

rehearse the scenes beforehand without a camera.

**What were the challenges in preparing for the role?**

I think the hardest thing for me was to put myself in Filipp's aggression and reticence, because I'm actually a very positive and open-minded person. He and I are two very different people. The rehearsals helped me a lot.

**Do you watch horror movies privately? If so, which movies do you like? If not, why not?**

I used to not really watch horror films because, for me, there was never really a reason for it. When I got selected for the role of Filipp, I started to discover this genre for myself. Now I really enjoy watching them.

**What is your favourite meal?**

My favorite food is usually what I'm eating right now.

# PETER HENGL

## DIRECTOR

### ***What is Family Dinner about?***

Family Dinner is actually a little chamber play - it's about a teenage girl who visits her relatives and realizes that they have a very strange relationship with one another. Something is going on in this family, but by the time she finds out what's going on, she's already part of the story herself.

### ***How did you come up with this material?***

I've always loved horror films because it's one of the boldest and most experimental genres in which you can do a lot with very little money. I also think it's one of the most cinematic genres. Of course, that attracted me a lot for my first film. I also decided early on that it should be a very small story with only a few characters. And without wanting to reveal too much: The resolution is based on nightmares I had as a small child.

### ***What is the theme of this film and why do you think it is important?***

I think there are a lot of themes that the film touches upon. At its core, it is a coming-of-age story: It's about our self-image and how people we trust influence us in our development. It's about family dynamics.



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### ***Is there a message this film is supposed to convey and who do you want to reach with it?***

It was very important to me that the film didn't make a clear statement. It touches difficult and complex topics, so I don't want you to be presented with a clear "moral of the story" at the end. The viewers should decide for themselves what they think about the characters. I would like it best if the film triggers a discussion!

### ***What attracts you to the horror film genre?***

Horror is always about the extreme. Extreme situations, extreme characters. These have always been the stories I liked the most, because they are instantly unique, because they touch you deep inside. Horror touches our deepest primal fears, horror is always a borderline experience.

### ***How did the casting process go to find the Simi actress?***

Together with our casting director Marion Rossmann, we searched for a long time and very broadly. Young roles are always very difficult to cast, and the Simi character carries the film in every respect. Not only is she the main character, she's in every single scene in the film - which means quite a stressful and demanding shoot for her. That is why we cast very widely across the whole German speaking area through agencies and also launched an open call for casting via Instagram. From the hundreds of applicants, we then decided on Nina Katlein, who not only fits the role perfectly, but is also incredibly talented. She really is the perfect Simi, and can perfectly capture the weakness and vulnerability, but also the enormous strength of this character!

### ***How did the casting process go when looking for the Filipp actor?***

We also searched very carefully for the role of Filipp - Filipp is a difficult character, because one is always unsure throughout the film whether Filipp is a friend or an enemy, a perpetrator or a victim. That is why we searched very broadly here - and we are very happy that we have found a great Filipp in Alexander Sladek!

## **Bio und Filmography Peter Hengl**

Peter Hengl is an Austrian screenwriter and director for film and television. He was born in 1983 in Kufstein, moved to Vienna in 2007 and studied at the Vienna Film Academy from 2008. His student films "Vadim" (Horror, 15 min) and "Der Held" (Dramedy, 30 min) have been shown at over 50 film festivals and have received numerous awards. Together with Marc Schlegel, he wrote the ORF city comedies "Curling for Eisenstadt" (2019) and "You can't have everything" (2021). "Family Dinner" is his first feature film as a director. In addition, he has several other television and cinema projects in advanced stages of development.

### **Filmography (selection)**

2019 - Curling for Eisenstadt, Drehbuch (together with Marc Schlegel)

TV movie - comedy

ORF

2020 - Wischen ist Macht: pilot script and format development, 2 episode scripts (together with Marc Schlegel)

half-hour comedy series

ORF

2021 - Man kann nicht alles haben: Drehbuch (together with Marc Schlegel)

TV movie - comedy

ORF

# LOLA BASARA

## PRODUCER

### ***What are the challenges in the production of a newcomer film?***

Family Dinner is Capra Film's first feature film production. We have been working with our co-production partners at Film AG for several years since the project development. It is also the first feature film by director Peter Hengl, which is why we are implementing the project as a so-called „workshop project“, which means that we have a reduced budget for the film, as many newcomers are involved in the project. The reduced budget is probably the greatest challenge, because at the same time we have high expectations of ourselves and, despite the tight war chest and few days of shooting, we want to produce an internationally competitive film.

### ***Why a horror film in Austria?***

Peter and I have been working together as a director and producer since our student days at the Vienna Film Academy. It was back then that we dedicated ourselves to high-quality genre film. We liked the horror genre the most, as there is a lot of narrative and innovative potential here. Horror is a universal genre that works very well internationally and is universally understandable across the language barrier. Our psychological new wave horror film Family Dinner has a strong Austrian soul, and I think it can be interesting outside the Austrian border as well.



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### ***What chances do you see for genre film in Austria?***

As a company, we are principally committed to the elevated genre, i.e. challenging genre films. We have several genre films in development, more horror films, thrillers and comedies. Our goal with Capra Film is to build an international brand for elevated genre films from Austria - because we believe we live in a country with a lot of narrative potential in this direction. Up to now Austria was internationally known for art house films, but our aim would be to direct a new, more audience-oriented perspective on Austrian film.

### ***What was important when putting the team together?***

As part of a newcomer film, it was important to us to put together a combination of experienced team members and young talents so

that they complement each other well and everyone benefits from each other's access. The film is being produced as a „workshop project“, so there are mostly newcomers on board - it makes us proud that many young talents can prove themselves in our film and show what they are capable of.

### **How does Corona affect the production process? How do you protect the team?**

Coping with the already tightly calculated shooting schedule during the pandemic is a great challenge - Corona hangs over us like a sword of Damocles. In order not to give this a chance, we had developed a hygiene concept, we had our own hygiene officer on the set, who made sure that all the rules we had set were adhered to. Regular PCR tests twice a week were a prerequisite for team members to be allowed to enter the set. The use of FFP2 masks in the interior by the crew is normal, just like body temperature measurements, and regular hand washing, as well as following the zone model developed by the Austrian film industry.

## **Bio und Filmography Lola Basara**

Lola Basara studied production at the Vienna Film Academy under Danny Krausz.

She has produced a number of successful short films and in 2016 was nominated for the Studio Hamburg Young Producer Award for her short film „Esel“.

In 2015 she founded the production company CAPRA FILM, meanwhile she has expanded the company with Marc Schlegel and Peter Hengl as company partners.

Capra Film has set itself the goal of producing sophisticated genre films with an Austrian identity and an international audience.

The psychological horror thriller FAMILY DINNER (funded by the Austrian Film Institute, Vienna Film Fund and ORF, among others) is the company's first feature film and is currently in post-production with a planned cinema release in 2022.

### **Filmografie als Produzentin (Auswahl):**

2021 "Family Dinner", director: Peter Hengl (90min, Horror/Thriller)

2017 "Labyrinth", Feature Trailer, Director: Peter Hengl (90min, Horror)

2016 "Generalprobe", (Drama, 7 min), Director: Jannis Lenz

2016 "Nachtlicht" (Experimentalfilm, 15 min), Director: Clara Stern

2015 „Esel“ (Drama, 24 min), Director: Rafael Haider

2012 „Der Held“ (Comedy, 30 min), Director: Peter Hengl

2011 „Vadim“ (Horror, 15 min), Director: Peter Hengl

# **CAPRA FILM**

## **PRODUCTION COMPANY**

Capra Film is a young company based in Vienna that aims to produce sophisticated genre game films with an Austrian character and a national and international target audience. We focus primarily on films that deal with current issues and are socially relevant. We are currently working on several elevated genre films in different stages of development. FAMILY DINNER is the company's first finished feature film.

FAMILY DINNER was created in coproduction with Film AG.

# **FILM AG**

## **PRODUCTION COMPANY**

Film AG (formerly Novotny & Novotny) has been producing award-winning feature films, documentaries, commercials and industrial films as well as television series for two decades. Our goal is to develop unique and convincing stories and to produce cinematic works that exist, touch and convince in the area of tension between entertainment, aspiration and relevance. Understanding ourselves as a European film production company, our expertise lies both in international co-productions geared towards the world market and in film productions that are successful with the Austrian audience. In the same way, we look for the special, the new, the courageous and the unique in the cinematic narrative, always with a focus on the best possible visibility for the respective film in this world of almost unlimited distribution possibilities.

This is our aim to create sustainable works. Culturally sustainable, sustainable in cooperation and ecologically as sustainable as one can design a working environment. Environmental sustainability is not a fad, no, it is a necessity. Sustainability does not make anything impossible, but it requires a different way of thinking in order to arrive at the same result. We like to cultivate this different way of thinking and have made it our corporate culture. Not just for the moment, but for our future.

# PICTURE INDEX

Directory „Stills“

# FILM STILLS

(c) Capra Film - Reprint free of charge



FD\_Still\_1



FD\_Still\_2



FD\_Still\_3



FD\_Still\_4

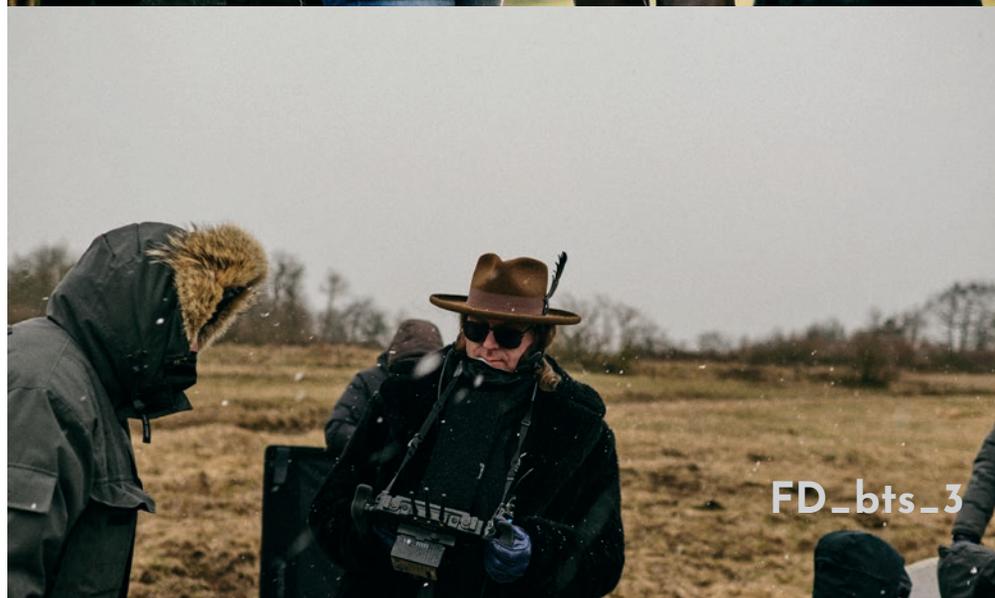
# BEHIND THE SCENES PHOTOS

(c) Felix Vratny  
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Left to right:  
Peter Hengl  
(director), Nina  
Katlein (Simi),  
Alexander  
Sladek (Filipp),  
Lola Basara  
(Producer)



Director Peter  
Hengl on set





FD\_bts\_10

Front left to right: Michael Pink (Stefan), Nina Katlein (Simi), Alexander Sladek (Filipp), Pia Hierzegger (Claudia)  
Back left to right: Lola Basara (Producer Capra Film), Peter Hengl (Director), Alexander Glehr (Producer Film AG), Johanna Scherz (Producer Film AG)

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