



M99 Moons

A FILM BY **JAN GASSMANN**

M-APPEAL PRESENTS A ZODIAC PICTURES PRODUCTION

IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH SWISS RADIO AND TELEVISION SRG SSR WITH VALENTINA DI PACE DOMINIK FELLMANN DANNY EXNAR

CASTING LISA OLÁH SOUND MIXER FLORIAN HINDER MUSIC BY MICHELLE GUREVICH MAKE-UP MARINA AEBI SIMONE ENKERLI COSTUME DESIGNER SOPHIE REBLE

PRODUCTION DESIGNER MIRJAM ZIMMERMANN EDITOR MIRIAM MAERK JACQUES L'AMOUR DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY YUNUS ROY IMER

LINE PRODUCER AMINTA ISEPPI PRODUCED BY RETO SCHAERLI LUKAS HOBI WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JAN GASSMANN

zodiacPICTURES





99 MOONS

A film by Jan Gassmann

Switzerland - 2022 - 110 min

Logline

Freedom and sexual attraction collide, sparking an intense, erotic love story

Short Synopsis

Bigna, a twenty-eight-year-old scientist, is used to having everything under control, even her erotic desires always follow rules. Thirty-three-year-old Frank searches for meaning in a haze of drugs, feeding on other people's affection. Their different worlds collide, and they become obsessively entwined in a passionate affair.

Long Synopsis

BIGNA, 29, is a tsunami researcher and about to take on a new job in Chile. She cares more about numbers than people and finds sexual satisfaction by engaging in anonymous role play with strangers. Her rule is: once and never again. When she meets FRANK, 33, something moves her, but nevertheless she gets rid of him. Control means everything to Bigna.

Six months later. Bigna and Frank are engaged in a passionate affair, and just before Bigna's departure, they admit their love for each other. Bigna decides to stay. Driven by their boundless passion, the two of them gradually come unglued. After a night of mutually inflicted injuries, Bigna flees to Chile, where she marries an older colleague. Frank is left behind alone, trying to get a grip on his pain.

Two and a half years later, they have separately tried to start over, but their mutual addiction to each other haunts them every day.

And then they meet again.

99 MOONS is a story of love in six chapters.



DIRECTOR'S BIO



Jan Gassmann, 34, is a director working at the intersection between fiction and documentary filmmaking. At the age of 21, his documentary "Chrigu" (2007) was premiered in the Competition of the Berlin Film Festival, winning the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury. Many other festivals (including Acid Cannes) and awards followed. Since then, he has been back in Berlin twice, with "Off Beat" (2010) and "Europe, She Loves" (2016). His other films, "Karma Shadub" (2013) and "Heimatland" (an omnibus film he initiated; 2015), won awards in the main competitions at the Nyon and Max Ophüls Festivals, respectively, and premiered at Locarno. He currently lives in Zurich.

Filmography:

2022: 99 MOONS - Feature (Writer & Director)

2016: EUROPE, SHE LOVES - Documentary (Writer & Director)

2015: HEIMATLAND - Feature (Writer & Director)

2013: KARMA SHADUB - Documentary (Co-Director & Editor)

2011: OFF BEAT - Feature (Writer & Director)

2007: CHRIGU - Documentary (Director & Editor)

INTERVIEW WITH JAN GASSMANN

The quest for true love has displaced the search for God in our time. The origins of 99 MOONS are in the present; close and intimate, naked and free.. - Jan Gassmann

Relationships are a topic that you often deal with in your films, most recently in "Europe, she Loves". What is it that interests you so much?

For me, love remains a kind of anarchistic power in a society that is influenced deeply by economic principles. You can't choose who you fall in love with or who you find sexually attractive. Love is full of secrets and conflicts that fascinate me as a filmmaker. Every relationship seeks its own ideals, rules and behaviour. In 99 MOONS, I wanted to take a closer look at these ideals and show different forms of relationships between two people. Where does a relationship begin? Where do we only talk about sex? How does a relationship succeed? Is it because of absolute fidelity? Or free love? Or by turning away from the world? Or through having a child?

Your main characters have very different life plans and sexuality plays an important role for both of them. How did these characters come into being while you were writing the script?

The script for 99 MOONS had been in development for almost ten years. The characters aged with me, over time they asked themselves different questions and reacted differently to situations. I had a clear idea of Bigna, the main female character, right from the beginning. The main male character, Frank, was more difficult for me to develop because, as a man, he is closer to me and I had more trouble looking at him objectively.

Bigna's sexuality emerged through research and conversations, but also from my desire to break viewing habits. Sexually, Bigna takes what she needs. She sets the rules and determines how her sexual encounters with men are to proceed - as anonymously as possible and one time only. It's the same with Frank. But he awakens something in her that makes her want to return to him... Frank, on the other hand, is forced into a rather classic male role by his hipster entourage, who see themselves as "modern" and "open". This is blown apart by his experience with Bigna. He learns through her that he is aroused purely by her lust, that he enjoys being dominated and that sexuality is also possible without penetration. For me, the film is also an examination of the dissolution of classic gender roles and the freedom that we could gain through this - but which many of us still shy away from.

You decided to cast the two main roles with amateurs, why?

My casting director Lisa Oláh and I invited about the same number of amateurs as professional actors to read for the roles, and the casting process took two years. The decision to shoot with two amateurs in the leading roles was made at the very end. We made this decision based less on the actors' CVs and more on our gut feeling. We were concerned with the chemistry between the actors, with rejection, attraction, friction. Their relationship with their bodies. It was clear to us that the casting of this amour fou would have a decisive influence on the finished film and of course it was a risk to shoot with two people who had never been in front of a film camera before. At the same time, they surprised us over and over again. I can explain the decision like this: With the professional actors we had cast, I had a clear idea of the finished film. With Valentina and Dominik I chose a black box and the chance of creating something beyond my imagination.

What do you have to bear in mind when filming with non-professionals? Has your experience as a documentary filmmaker helped you?

I place the same demands on amateurs as I do on professional actors. They must have the gift of being in the moment once the camera is rolling. That is, to live in front of the camera, to breathe properly, to smoke - to have clarity and calm within themselves. That is the most difficult thing for all performers. Improvisation is an important tool for me to create new "true" moments and not fall into repetition.

You can feel my experience as a documentary film director on my feature film sets. I give the actors a lot of freedom in terms of their movements, their space, the camera must react to them and not the actors to the camera. The sets are set up for 360 degrees acting. If there's a record player on set, it works and you can listen to music. I almost always shoot in long takes that have to be condensed in the editing process. I like creative accidents and coincidences on the set. Even though I prepare meticulously with my team in advance, I want to be creative on set myself. That's why a shoot for me, is always under the proviso that we have "permission to fail...". It's okay if something goes wrong. That way we can also take risks. I think this way of shooting basically suits amateurs, because it's not about reproducing a directorial idea perfectly, but about capturing the moment, the here and now.

The film has many intimate scenes. How did you go about shooting them? What was important to you in the portrayal of sexuality?

It was clear from the script that filming the intimate scenes would be a challenge. That's why the producers from Zodiac suggested early on that I should shoot with the help of an intimacy coordinator. The job of intimacy coordinator is quite new on set and it was great to work with Cornelia Dworak for 99 MOONS.

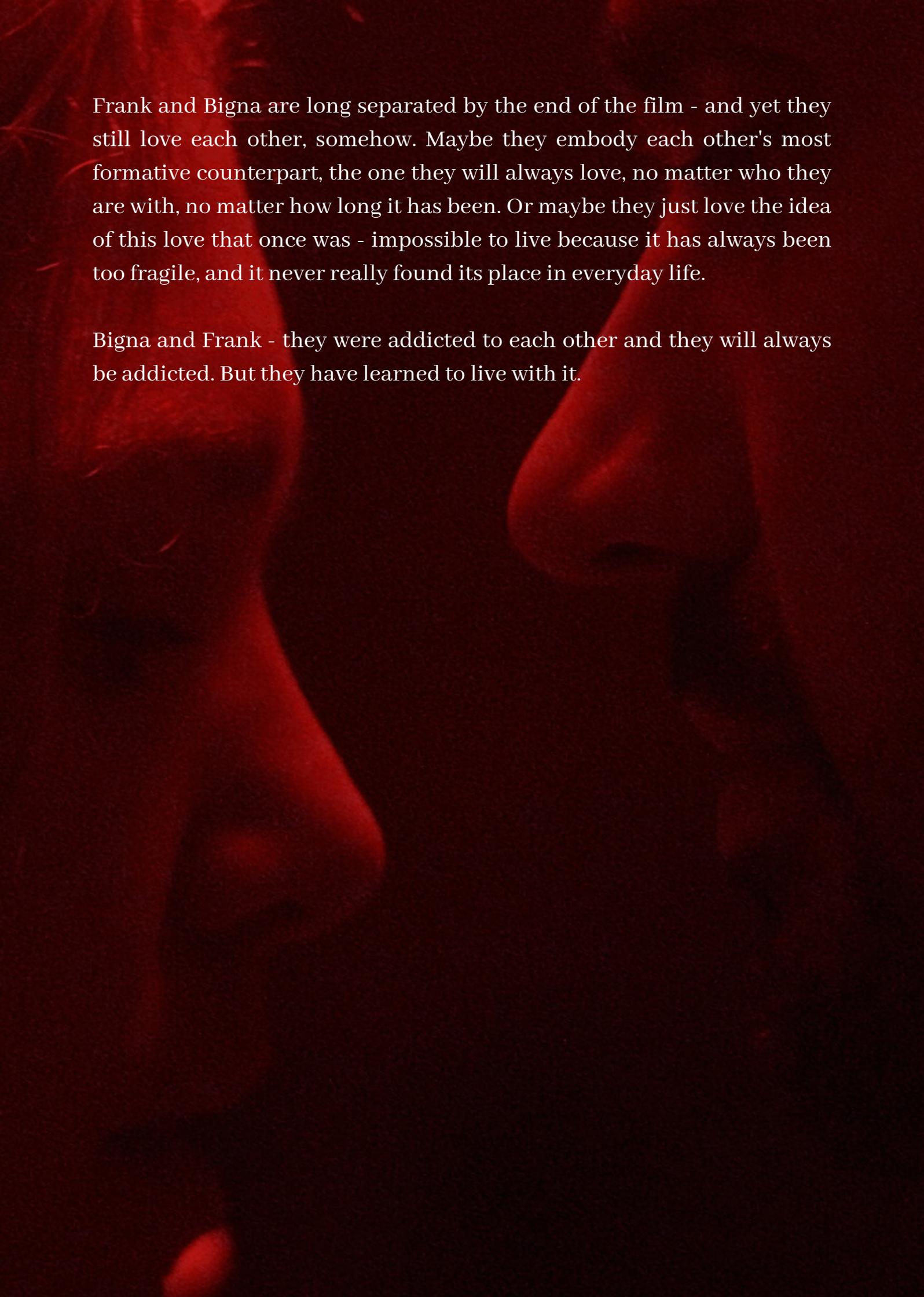
We rehearsed many of the scenes in advance, worked out a detailed choreography, and were then able to act freely again on set, with pre-defined limits regarding touching or camera angles. Besides the rules of a "closed set" (only a few people are present during filming in order to create an atmosphere that is as intimate as possible), I learned a lot about communication in relation to intimacy. For example, as a director how to name body parts precisely and without shame, thus demystify the sex scenes to some extent. This way, the actors can concentrate on their performance and on the moment while shooting and are not held back by shame or embarrassment.

You shot the story chronologically as far as possible with a small team. What did that mean for the shoot?

I like to shoot chronologically. It gives me, but also the team, the feeling of moving forward in a story and in the world. At the same time, shooting chronologically is a luxury for the director and the actors, because it is more time-consuming and requires more complicated logistics. For this shoot, it was the right thing to do. We took more time, and in return we opted for a larger team and more creative possibilities. For example, we shot with fixed lighting and did not constantly adjust the light. In addition, we often worked with "real" light sources, which can be seen in the frame.

Bigna and Frank break up in the end. What's your view on long term relationships and their place in today's context?

The desire for the "one true" love is sold to us constantly and very successfully - and the search for it determines our society. I myself do also want to believe in the long-term relationship and as a father of a small child, also in the nuclear family - but it takes a lot of work, the willingness to constantly change and as little ego as possible. Either you grow together or you separate.



Frank and Bigna are long separated by the end of the film - and yet they still love each other, somehow. Maybe they embody each other's most formative counterpart, the one they will always love, no matter who they are with, no matter how long it has been. Or maybe they just love the idea of this love that once was - impossible to live because it has always been too fragile, and it never really found its place in everyday life.

Bigna and Frank - they were addicted to each other and they will always be addicted. But they have learned to live with it.



CAST BIOGRAPHIES

VALENTINA DI PACE studied art at the Art Academy in Riga, Latvia. After graduating in 2013, she started working as a freelance artist. 99 Moons was her first acting experience in a feature film. Valentina has Sicilian roots and lives and works in Zurich.

DOMINIK FELLMANN discovered the art of film making at a young age. It has been his passion to document his surroundings through digital and analogue videography/photography ever since. Besides his work as a filmmaker, he also works as a DJ. 99 Moons is his first acting experience. Currently he works as a director and cinematographer for video productions and event technology.



CREDITS

MAIN CAST:

Valentina Di Pace: Bigna

Dominik Fellmann: Frank

Danny Exnar: George

Jessica Huber: Barbara

Leo Matteo Girolamo: Max

Gregory Hari: Thaks

Ale Lindman: Sara

Katerina Stoykova: Nadja

Annina Machaz: Tina

Noemi Ceresola: Summer Woman with Dog

Lia J. von Blarer: Divna

Kathrin Schweizer: Taxi Woman

MAIN CREW:

Director: Jan Gassmann

Scriptwriter: Jan Gassmann

Director of Photography: Yunus Roy Imer

Editor: Miriam Maerk & Jacques L'Amour

Sound: Florian Hinder

Sound Design: Oscar van Hoogevest

Music: Michelle Gurevich

Production Designer: Mirjam Zimmermann

Costume Designer: Sophie Reble

Make-up Supervision: Marina Aebi

Casting: Lisa Olàh

Production Manager: Aminta Iseppi

Producers: Reto Schaerli, Lukas Hobi

MAIN INFO

Original title: 99 Moons

International title: 99 Moons

Duration: 110 min

Aspect Ratio: 2.35:1

Format: 4K

Sound: 5.1

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Co-production companies: Swiss Radio and Television SRF

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