

**STRAND
RELEASING**

presents

MUTT

A FILM BY
VUK LUNGULOV-KLOTZ

Starring Lío Mehiel, Cole Doman, Mimi Ryder, Alejandro Goic

PRESS NOTES

*OFFICIAL SELECTION
Berlin International Film Festival
Sundance Film Festival*

Country of Origin: United States
Format: DCP/4:3/Color
Sound: 5.1 Surround
Running Time: 87 minutes
Genre: Drama
Not Rated
In English and Spanish with English Subtitles

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SYNOPSIS

Feña, a young trans guy bustling through life in New York City, is afflicted with an incessantly challenging day that resurrects ghosts from his past. Laundromats, subway turnstiles, and airport transfers are the hectic background to this emotional drama that overlaps past, present, and future. Settling the disharmony of transitional upheaval in relationships familial, romantic,

and platonic is Feña's task at hand, and his resulting juggling act is equal parts skillful, fumbling, and honest. In negotiating his obliqueness, the poignant moments he finds between himself and others – as the distance between them closes – are warm, true, and touching.

Vuk Lungulov-Klotz's directorial debut is at once precise in its specificity and wholly relatable in its grand humanity. A dexterous, visceral lead performance by Lío Mehiel embodies inbetweenness in many forms. *Mutt* earns its most difficult discussions through its tenderness towards each character's struggle with the complexity of trans life, Latinx life in America, and of human life at large.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

MUTT is about "in-betweenness." It's a film about being caught between two worlds, whether that's race, gender, nationality or sexuality. But it is also a story about the space that exists between two people and how we care for each other while constantly struggling to marry our past and present selves into a unified whole. Too often we push ourselves out of situations because we fear the worst and imagine the expectations others have for us, forgetting to simply ask. Mutt reminds us to ask, and ultimately, reminds us that we are less alone than we think.

Growing up, I didn't know any trans people. When I came out, I was effectively the first trans person I'd ever met. Though I'd like for my transness to be the least interesting part about me, I feel a deep need to help shape the cultural trans identity by adding my voice and telling stories through my specific lens.

I'm a Chilean-Serbian mutt. Growing up, I lived between Chile and the USA, understanding and belonging to both cultures. And after coming out as a transgender man, I felt I was able to empathize with both genders. I consider myself intimately acquainted with in-betweenness, but I rarely see characters, let alone films, that authentically reflect my experience.

I'm tired of cliches within trans representations, of trans people having to explain themselves on screen, being two-dimensional, or just side characters. I'm tired of clarifying that trans stories aren't just about being trans but about so much more.

I know the physical and mental transformations involved in gender transition can seem extremely foreign to outsiders. But the truth is, being caught between two worlds is as fundamental to the human experience as any. By exploring three intimate relationships in our protagonist's life, the film raises questions about gender, love, and the in-between space that often defines a trans life (and, indeed, all our lives to some extent). And by presenting our lead in brutally honest terms, the idea of his "trans-ness" finds itself upstaged by his sheer humanity. This ability to meet people where they are, at a human level, cuts directly to the heart of the piece and, we hope, will cut equally deep into the heart of our audience.

BIOGRAPHIES

LÍO MEHIEL (THEY/THEM) | 'FEÑA' (HE/HIM)

Lío Mehiel is a Puerto Rican and Greek artist, actor, and filmmaker.

Their work spans film, television, multimedia installation, theater, and events. They are fascinated by the inherent contradiction of the trans experience — one deeply rooted in the body while also transcending beyond the body.

Lío began their career as a professional salsa dancer and child actor on Broadway. They can now be seen on shows like *WeCrashed* (Apple+) and *Tales of the City* (Netflix). They are making their feature film debut in the lead role of Mutt by writer/director Vuk LK, which will make its world premiere at Sundance Film Festival 2023 and its international premiere at Berlinale 2023.

As a filmmaker, Lío produced *Chaperone*, a queer short film which premiered at Sundance 2022. They wrote, directed, produced, and starred in *Disforia*, a short film which premiered at Outfest Film Festival in 2018. They are now stuck inside of a psychomagic act with this story as they write the feature script version and confront their own medical transition.

As an installation artist, their immersive piece *Arcade Americana* was included in the list of 10 Best Immersive Shows in NYC by TimeOut and GOTHAMIST.

Lío is currently the producer and creative director of *Angels*, a developing collection of stone sculptures of transgender humans. The works were first featured as part of a pop-up installation at Outfest LA in 2022, and will be debuted in full at SIZED Gallery LA in 2023.

Lío is a co-founder of Voyeur Productions with Russell Kahn and Dulcinee DeGuere. They attended Northwestern University, and are an alumni of the Emerge NYC residency program for artists and activists.

COLE DOMAN (HE/HIM) | 'JOHN'

Cole Doman is a trained stage and film actor living in Brooklyn, NY. During his time in Chicago, he studied at the School at Steppenwolf under Amy Morton, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Michael Patrick Thornton, and more. Chris Jones of the Chicago Tribune named Cole among the "Hot New Faces of Chicago Theater" in 2016. He made his film debut as the titular role in the critically acclaimed *Henry Gamble's Birthday Party* directed by Stephen Cone. He has profiles with IndieWire, Brooklyn Magazine, OUT, Milk.xyz, and was featured as one of "Best Breakout Performances of 2016" by The Film Stage. He can also be seen in Alan Ball's *Uncle Frank*

(Sundance 2020, Amazon Studios) as young Frank Bledsoe played by Paul Bettany. On television he has appeared in "Let the Right One In", "Gossip Girl", "Modern Family", "Law & Order: SVU", "Chicago PD", "Equal", and "Shameless". He developed & stars in the short film *Starfuckers* (MUBI) directed by Antonio Marziale which was presented in competition at Sundance Film Festival, Berlinale, and Telluride Film Festival. He stars in Vuk Lungulov-Klotz's debut feature *Mutt*, executive produced by Silas Howard, which will be presented in competition at Sundance Film Festival 2023. Other forthcoming films include: Matt Fifer's sophomore feature *Treatment* for AMC's Shudder; Zia Anger's debut feature *My First Film* for MUBI. Most recently, he starred in the world premiere of *Your Own Personal Exegesis* by Julia May Jonas at Lincoln Center Theatre, directed by Annie Tippe, for which his performance was lauded by The New York Times and even cartooned by The New Yorker.

MIMI RYDER (SHE/HER) | 'ZOE'

MiMi Ryder is an NYC based actress, who rose to fame after being cast in the Broadway productions of *Matilda The Musical*, in the title role of "Matilda," and Disney's *Frozen*, as "Young Elsa." She will soon be seen starring in Vuk Lungulov-Klotz's *MUTT*, set to premiere at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival.

ALEJANDRO GOIC (HE/HIM) | 'PABLO'

Alejandro Goic is a recognized Chilean actor and theatre director, with a career spanning more than 30 years on the Ibero-American stage. His personality and versatility make him a unique actor.

In his film acting career, he has been directed by the most renowned directors of his country, including; Pablo Larraín (*El Club*, 2015), Sebastián Lelio (*Una mujer fantástica*, 2017 and *Gloria*, 2013), Sebastián Silva (*La Nana*, 2009), Fernando Guzonni (*Carne de perro*, 2012; *Jesús*, 2016, and *Blanquita*, 2022, film representative of Chile in the 2023 Oscars, by the Chilean Film Academy) and Manuela Martelli (1976, 2022), among many others.

He has also participated in international productions such as "Los 33 de Atacama" (Spain, 2010), "Die Briefe meiner Mutter" (Germany, 2014), "De la noche a la mañana" (Argentina, 2020), and currently *Mutt* (USA, 2022), which will have its worldwide premiere at the Sundance Festival in 2023.

On television, Goic has participated in national and international productions, such as the fiction series "Prófugos" (2011, HBO), the telenovela "Secretos en el Jardín" (2013, Canal 13), where his performances and script were praised by the public and specialized critics. He also participated in the biographical series "Martín, el hombre y la leyenda" (2018), and the fiction series "La Jauría" (2020-2022, Amazon) coproduced by Fábula, Fremantle, and Kapow for Amazon Prime.

The acting versatility of Alejandro Goic is evidenced by the interpretation of different profiles that he has put on stage; The figure of a former torturer and lonely man who seeks to rebuild his

life (Carne de perro), A priest who is hiding, concealing his past (El Club), A journalist who manages to shake the population by investigating the political circles of his country (Bala loca), and a gay scribe in a story of Chile in the 17th century (La Doña), among many others.

For these roles and more, Alejandro Goic has been awarded and recognized throughout his career. In 2011, he received the Altazor Award for Best Television Actor for his role in the series "Volver a mí" and Best Film Actor for "Carne de perro". He also received the APES Award for Best Supporting Performance for "Secretos en el jardín", an award given by the Association of Journalists and Film Writers of Chile. Lastly, He has been awarded twice with the Caleuche Awards: in 2017 as Best Leading Actor in Series for "Bala loca" and in 2018 as Best Leading Actor in Film for "Jesús", awards that recognize the work of film and television professionals in Chile. Additionally, he received different international awards for his role in "El Club", being awarded twice as Best Actor at the Mar de Plata Film Festival and the Ceará Film Festival.

VUK LUNGULOV-KLOTZ (HE/HIM) | WRITER, DIRECTOR

Vuk Lungulov-Klotz (writer/director) has a culturally diverse upbringing. Born in New York City to Chilean and Serbian immigrants, he was raised between Chile, the US, and Serbia. As a transgender storyteller, he hopes to expand queer narratives. His work focuses on intimate moments we often miss if we're not looking. Mutt is his debut feature film. With his feature film script, MUTT, he is an alum of the Sundance Institute Labs, the Inside Out Financing Forum, and was a top five finalist for the Tribeca / AT&T Untold Stories Grant. His award winning trans-themed short film, "Still Liam," played at festivals internationally and earned the attention of celebrated queer filmmakers Ira Sachs and Silas Howard, who have both become mentors. Vuk is also an alum of the Ryan Murphy HALF Initiative Program, where he completed a mentorship under director Janet Mock on the FX series POSE. His feature film debut, Mutt, premiered at Sundance 2023 and is having its international premiere at Berlinale 2023. He lives in Brooklyn, NY.

ALEXANDER STEGMAIER (HE/HIM) | PRODUCER

Alexander Stegmaier (producer) is a manager and producer working in film and TV with a focus on underrepresented voices. He previously worked in development at Walt Disney Animation Studios where he helped build unique worlds and characters, expanding some of the company's biggest franchises including Frozen, Moana, and Zootopia. Since then, Alexander has developed projects with companies such as Matt Damon and Ben Affleck's Pearl Street Films, Chris Columbus' 26th Street, and Miranda Bailey's Cold Iron Pictures. His clients have sold projects to ABC, 20th Television, Warner Bros, and eOne, among others. Prior to Disney, Alexander was an award-winning art editor and producer at National Geographic magazine where he covered a range of human-interest stories that reached millions of viewers a month.

STEPHEN SCOTT SCARPULLA (HE/HIM) | PRODUCER

Stephen Scott Scarpulla (producer) began his career as a Broadway actor, before eventually becoming a development exec and filmmaker. After graduating from NYU, where he won multiple awards for his work, Stephen co-founded Other|Side Pictures, a full service production house in NYC. He has produced and directed multiple award-winning projects, including the feature A New High, which profiled homeless mountain climbers in Washington and was distributed by The Orchard. Stephen is currently in development on a number of film and tv projects with partners such as Matt Damon and Ben Affleck's Pearl Street Films and Miranda Bailey's Cold Iron Pictures.

JENNIFER KUCZAJ (SHE/HER) | PRODUCER

Jennifer Kuczaj (producer) began her career at Jersey Films, participating in the creation of iconic works like PULP FICTION, GATTACA, and ERIN BROCKOVICH. Currently in Austin, Texas, Jennifer is an independent film producer having produced SXSW Audience Award winner, TRANSPECOS, Emmy-nominated border documentary PORVENIR, art house narrative FUGITIVE DREAMS and her most recent film MUTT, a finalist at Tribeca's 2022 Untold Stories Program which premiered in U.S. Dramatic Competition at Sundance 2023 and is set to have its international premiere at Berlinale 2023.

JOEL MICHAELY (HE/HIM) | PRODUCER

Joel Michaely is an actor and producer known for starring in the teen comedies "Can't Hardly Wait", Academy Award Winner Roger Avary's "The Rules of Attraction" and Sundance 2000 LGBTQ cult classic "But I'm A Cheerleader".

He Executive Produced and co-starred in the Sundance Dramatic competition film "Wild Indian" (2021) that starred Michael Greyeyes, Chaske Spencer and Jesse Eisenberg and was nominated for 3 Spirit Awards.

Joel Executive Produced the Sundance Dramatic Competition film "Farewell Amor" 2020 that won a Spirit Award and National Board of Review Top 10 independent films and produced "I Am Michael" the controversial LGBTQ drama starring James Franco and Zachary Quinto at Sundance 2015. The first film he produced was a Sundance film lab project released by Sony Classics called "The Quiet" that starred Edie Falco and Elisha Cuthbert.

Other notable Sundance performances from Joel were in "Logorama" (Academy Award Winner for best animated short), "Celeste and Jesse Forever", and "Interior Leather Bar"

Upcoming Joel is recurring on the new Netflix series "Obliterated" from the creators of "Cobra Kai".

This past year, Joel Executive Produced and was in Paul Schrader's "The Card Counter" starring Oscar Isaac and Tiffany Haddish.

Joel recently co-starred in the Venice Film Festival hit "Run Hide Fight", as the main villain in "Vanquish" opposite Ruby Rose and Morgan Freeman, "Lansky" with Harvey Keitel, as "Edward Dickinson" opposite Molly Shannon's "Emily Dickinson" in "Wild Nights With Emily". Upcoming flicks that he produced and costar in include "Saint Clare" opposite Bella Thorne and "The Comeback Traill" with Robert Deniro, Tommy Lee Jones and Morgan Freeman.

SILAS HOWARD (HE/HIM) | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Silas Howard (Executive Producer) is an award-winning director, writer, and producer focused on telling honest narratives filled with groundbreaking characters. He brings both uncompromising vision and emotional insight to each of his projects, profoundly illuminating the experience of those who live outside the norm. His credit include executive producing and directing on FX's Emmy-nominated series Pose, executive producing and directing on Apple TV+'s Peabody Award-winning Dickinson, and directing Sundance premiere and IFC Films internationally distributed film, A Kid Like Jake. His television credits include directing on multiple seasons of Emmy award-winning Transparent, The Fosters, Faking It, This Is Us, High Maintenance, Tales of the City, and Josh Thomas' Freeform show, Everything's Gonna Be Okay.

ANDREW CARLBERG (HE/HIM) | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Named by Variety (alongside Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Mindy Kaling, Ryan Coogler, Beau Willimon, and Olivia Wilde) as one of "Hollywood's New Leaders," Carlberg is an Academy Award-winning film, television, new media, Broadway and Los Angeles stage producer. Andrew's extensive credits include, but aren't limited to, ABC's Castle, DirecTV's Full Circle, Broadway's Romeo and Juliet and Side Show, Celebration Theatre's Ovation Award winning productions of The Boy from Oz, The Color Purple: The Musical, and Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, the worldwide hit improv-based show The Blind Date Project, the Neil LaBute penned feature films Some Girl(s) and Dirty Weekend, actress Jennifer Morrison's feature directorial debut Sun Dogs (Netflix 2018), and the 2018 and 2021 Official Sundance Selection The Blazing World (short and feature).

Notably, Carlberg was the producer of Skin, which won the 2019 Academy Award for Live Action Short Film.

Recent credits include the romantic comedy Sister of the Groom (starring Alicia Silverstone and Tom Everett Scott, and released by Saban Films in December 2020), the feature film adaptation of his short film The Blazing World, which premiered at 2021 Sundance Film Festival, as well as the HBOMax drama The Fallout, which premiered at the 2021 SXSW Film Festival, and won the Grand Jury and Audience Award. Carlberg also executive produced the short films Anna (which premiered in competition at the 72nd Cannes Film Festival) and Feeling Through (alongside Academy Award-winner Marlee Matlin), which was nominated at the 93rd Academy Awards. Other recent feature films include Peace in the Valley (2022 Tribeca Film Festival premiere) and Mutt (2023 Sundance Film Festival premiere).

Carlberg has sold projects to HBO, Netflix, CBS, DirecTV and more - and has an ambitious slate of film, television and theater projects in development. Andrew is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with Shakespeare studies at Oxford University, a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Producers Guild of America, an alum of Film Independent's Fast Track Producing Fellowship and New York's Independent Filmmaker Project, and an event producer for the I Have a Dream Foundation - Los Angeles and the National Breast Cancer Coalition.

HANNAH KETTERING (SHE/HER) | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Hannah D. Kettering is a co-founder and managing partner of Mongoose Picture House. In addition to serving as an executive producer at MPH, she is a writer, director, and producer. Prior to Mongoose, she produced large-scale events and live event broadcasts at Agency EA, and branded digital and live media content at UCB Digital. She has written and directed a number of shorts and is a member of the 2112 Chicago Music, Film, Tech Incubator with a focus on building the independent film community in the Midwest.

SPARK FEATURES | EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Spark Features is a financing, development and production company that aims to support the work of emerging and diverse voices in film- with a particular focus on socially conscious subject matter. Spark was founded in late 2022 by Robina Riccitiello and Josh Peters. For more information, visit [Sparkfeatures.com](https://sparkfeatures.com)

MATTHEW POTHIER (HE/HIM) | DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Matthew Pothier (Director of Photography) is a Los Angeles based freelance cinematographer and photographer, and alumnus of the Film & Media Arts Department at the University of Utah. Matthew was the Director of Photography for "Sometimes, I Think About Dying," and "Starfuckers," both selected as part of the Sundance Film Festival in 2019 and 2022 respectively. His cinematography work includes "Back to Life: The Torin Yater-Wallace Story," which can be seen on Amazon Prime Video and "of_Angels," a short film that premiered at the LA Shorts Fest, an international Oscar qualifying festival. Pothier's acclaimed commercial work represents brands including REI, Nike, Oakley, Intel, Skullcandy, Sierra Nevada and Lululemon. His still photography has been featured on Ignant and c41 magazine.

ADAM DICTEROW (HE/HIM) | EDITOR

Adam Dicterow, editor, trained under his mentor Anne McCabe, ACE, for seven years. Over the course of the many projects they worked on together, he utilized his creativity, adaptability and invaluable technical skills, climbing from apprentice editor to additional editor. Adam has had the privilege of collaborating with accomplished directors, including Marielle Heller (on *Can*

you Ever Forgive me?, *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*, and *What the Constitution Means to Me*), Robin Wright (on *Land*), and Stephen Chbosky (on *Dear Evan Hansen*). He has also worked on multiple television shows, most notably HBO's *Succession* (season one). Adam has gained experience traversing various genres from drama and dark comedy to horror. Most recently, he edited Vuk Lungulov-Klotz's *Mutt*, which premiered at Sundance 2023 and is having its international premiere at Berlinale 2023.. A New York City native, Adam currently resides in Brooklyn.

CAST

Feña	Lío Mehiel
John	Cole Doman
Zoe	MiMi Ryder
Pablo	Alejandro Goic
Aidan	Jasai Chase Owens
Fiona	Jari Jones
Mark	Ben Groh
Jenny	Sarah Herrman
Natasha	Naomi Asa
Cigarette Guy	Desmond Confoy
Owen	Owen Laheen
Bank Clerk	Lizbeth Van Zoelen
Pharmacist	Charles Falkowitz
Sophia	Talya Skolnik
Ken	Gareth Smit
Man in Subway	Roger Mancusi
Woman in Subway	Deborah Stegmaier
Mom	Lisa Knightly
Jack the dog	Jack Herrman-Stuckey

CREW

**Writer and Director
Producer**

Vuk Lungulov-Klotz
Alexander Stegmaier
Stephen Scott Scarpulla
Vuk Lungulov-Klotz
Joel Michaely
Silas Howard
Sarah Herrman
Hannah D. Kettering
Susie Hile
Andrew Carlberg
Lucky 13 Productions
Spark Features

Executive Producer

**Director of Photography
Production Designer
Editor
Costume Designer
Sound Design**

Matthew Pothier
Alanna Murray
Adam Dicterow
Elena Lark
Ash Knowlton
Amir Banan
James William Blades
Taul Katz

Score

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