



# nico. 1988

A FILM BY SUSANNA NICCHIARELLI



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE  
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA  
La Biennale di Venezia 2017

Orizzonti Award  
for Best Film



# nico. 1988

Distributeur: Cinemien  
'Chateau Amsterdam'  
Gedempt Hamerkanaal 139a  
1021 KP Amsterdam  
Tel: +31 (0)20 5776010  
E-mail: [info@cinemien.nl](mailto:info@cinemien.nl)  
[www.cinemien.nl](http://www.cinemien.nl)

Publiciteit: Manon de Weerd  
E-mail: [manon@cinemien.nl](mailto:manon@cinemien.nl)  
Tel: 020 5776014 / 06 81790714

Marketing: Tessa Jansen  
E-mail: [tessa@cinemien.nl](mailto:tessa@cinemien.nl)  
Tel: 020-5776017

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Singer-songwriter Nico nadert de vijftig en leidt een teruggetrokken leven in Manchester, waar weinig nog doet denken aan haar roemruchte jaren als muze van Andy Warhol en zangeres van The Velvet Underground in de sixties. Ooit werd ze aanbeden vanwege haar legendarische schoonheid, nu maakt ze zich niet meer druk om haar uiterlijk en ook haar carrière lijkt voorbij, tot haar nieuwe manager haar en haar oude band op tournee door Europa stuurt. Nico, 1988 is een muzikale roadmovie over de wedergeboorte van een dappere en eigenzinnige artiest, moeder en vrouw achter het icoon.

## Comments from writer-director SUSANNA NICCHIARELLI

The music Nico made was difficult, but it was by far one of the most interesting, uncompromising productions of the period: she created a unique style combining personal research with provoking experimental solutions and irony, always refusing to worry about the commerciality of her production. While the Disco Music phenomenon was exploding around her she kept on stubbornly composing those gloomy and disturbing atmospheres that influenced radically the Gothic and New Wave movements, and most of the underground production of the Eighties. All this said, unfortunately very few know about this aspect of Nico's life.

Nico is mentioned mostly in association with the famous men she slept with or in connection with the Factory-Warhol/Velvet Underground experience, but Nico was and did much more in the years following those experiences. Andy Warhol once said: "she became a fat junkie and disappeared", but nothing could be less true. I fell in love with Nico also for her wit and irony and I have tried to tell her story with the necessary distance and the absence of dramatic sentimentalisms, in a way I think, or hope, she herself would have told it. In writing and filming I always tried to keep the right distance and respect that I believe is due when dealing with a true story.



Nico's story is the story of an uncompromising artist who finds satisfaction in her art only after having lost most of her fans; of one the most beautiful women in the world who finally becomes happy when she gets rid of her beauty. I wanted to make a movie about this, about the woman Nico was behind the image that most people have of her, behind the icon: beyond "Nico", her stage name, the real Christa. And with her story I wanted to tell the story of many other women, because Nico's parable, though dramatically extreme, contains many of the difficulties that a woman and artist and mother goes through with maturity.

Trine Dyrholm gave an extraordinary contribution to my film and to me: she gave vitality and energy to my Nico, helping me to avoid making a biopic that imitated or celebrated the character. She supported the film with the right sparkle of wit it deserved and together, first of all through the music (other than an actress, Trine is also a singer and musician), then through Nico's words and actions, we reinvented the woman we imagined must have been behind the star.



With Trine I shared my biographical research, all the materials and interviews I collected of the witnesses: with her I created a difficult character, controversial, at times unpleasant, but we accepted the challenge that she could become lovable for the public. With Trine and with the rest of the cast, especially with costarring John Gordon Sinclair, I used the eyes of the others surrounding Nico, from the manager to the band members, to depict the character's true nature.

I recreated the atmosphere of a loser band in a road-movie around Europe in the Eighties, where the absurd situations of a badly organized tour of a fallen star gave me the possibility to lighten the drama with irony, and to show how Nico's story, like everybody's, was in constant movement between drama and farce.



The musicians with whom we readapted the songs are an extremely talented Italian band: Gatto Ciliegia contro il Grande Freddo make very experimental, and very melancholic, electronic music. Their musical research is among one of the most interesting ones of the last ten years in Italy, and I believe that, working together with Trine, they have approached Nico's music with both the respect it deserves and the courage of reinterpreting it. Our idea was to re-interpret, re-live and re-elaborate emotionally all the components of Nico's story, in order to make them contemporary and universal.

In creating the right look for the film, with cinematographer Crystel Fournier whom I chose for the wonderful job she did on Céline Sciamma's movies and for the empathy she immediately showed in approaching this screenplay, we tried to recreate an image that could evoke the second half of the Eighties: the quality of those videos, the square format, the colour of the lights used at the time and the low-fi on the analogic support were our reference to tell this story of this group of out-of-place losers, prisoners of a time in which they couldn't find their space.



**SUSANNA  
NICCHIARELLI  
(writer-director)**

Susanna Nicchiarelli was born in Rome in 1975. With a degree in Philosophy and a PHD at the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, she graduated in Filmmaking from the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome in 2004.

She began her career working with Nanni Moretti, directing one of the *Diari della Sacher*, produced by Sacher Films and presented at the Venice Film Festival.

She has written and directed many short films and documentaries, and two feature-length films: *Cosmonaut* (2009), winner of the Controcampo award at the Venice Film Festival and nominated as Best First Film at the David di Donatello and Silver Ribbon awards, and *Discovery at Dawn* (2013), presented at the Rome Film Festival.

She has also made two short animated films in stop-motion: *Sputnik 5*, presented at the Venice Film Festival, winner of the Silver Ribbon award and distributed in theatres with her film *Cosmonaut*, and *Esca Viva*, presented at the Rome Film Festival in 2012.

*Nico, 1988* is her third feature film.



**TRINE DYRHOLM**  
**as Nico**

Trine Dyrholm, winner of the Silver Bear at the 2016 Berlinale and nominated at the EFA as best actress for *The Commune* by Thomas Vinterberg, is a Danish actress, singer and songwriter.

She is known for her roles in *Festen* by Thomas Vinterberg, *Love Is All You Need* and *In a Better World* (Best Foreign Language Film at the 2010 Oscars and Golden Globes) by Susanne Bier, and *A Royal Affair* by Nikolaj Arcel.

## THE PRODUCTION



### VIVO FILM

VIVO FILM, established in Rome at the beginning of 2004 by Gregorio Paonessa and Marta Donzelli, is an independent production company with a catalogue of over 40 films, presented and awarded at the most prestigious festivals worldwide.

In 2007 *Il mio paese* by Daniele Vicari won the David di Donatello Award for Best Documentary and *Imatra* by Corso Salani was awarded the Pardo d'Oro – Special Jury Prize in Locarno's Filmmakers of the present section.

Vivo Film's productions include Michelangelo Frammartino's *Le Quattro Volte*, Europa Cinemas Label Award at Cannes' Directors' Fortnight in 2010; Emma Dante's *A Street in Palermo*, which won the Best Actress award at the Venice Film Festival in 2013 and *Sworn Virgin* by Laura Bispuri, which premiered in Competition at the Berlinale in 2015.

In 2016 Andrea De Sica's *Children of the Night* premiered at the 2016 Torino Film Festival; and Andrea De Sica was presented with the Silver Ribbon Award for Best Newcomer Director.

### TARANTULA

Joseph Rouschop created Tarantula Belgium at the end of the '90s, driven by the wish to safeguard the sincerity and dreams of the filmmakers with whom he was working. Ever since Tarantula has been contributing to the vitality of Belgian audio-visual production with films like *Bitter Flowers* by Olivier Meys, *Baden Baden* by Rachel Lang, *All Cats Are Grey* by Savina Dellicour, *Rising Voices* by Bénédicte Liénard and Mary Jimenez and less recently with *Private Property* by Joachim Lafosse, *Last Winter* by John Shank, *Mobile Home* by François Pirot...

Tarantula is also very involved in international co-productions, with Italy: *Nico, 1988* by Susanna Nicchiarelli, *Children of the Night* by Andrea De Sica, *Pasolini* by Abel Ferrara; with France: *Neither Heaven Nor Earth* by Clément Cogitore, with Canada: *Congorama* by Philippe Falardeau, with Taiwan: *Face* by Tsai Ming-Liang, with Palestine...

## CAST

Nico  
Richard  
Sylvia  
Ari  
Domenico  
Laura  
Alex  
Francesco

Trine Dyrholm  
John Gordon Sinclair  
Anamaria Marinca  
Sandor Funtek  
Thomas Trabacchi  
Karina Fernandez  
Calvin Demba  
Francesco Colella

a VIVO FILM with RAI CINEMA and TARANTULA production

In coproduction with VOO and BE TV supported by EURIMAGES, MINISTERO DEI BENI E DELLE ATTIVITÀ CULTURALI E DEL TURISMO - DIREZIONE GENERALE CINEMA, REGIONE LAZIO - AWISO PUBBLICO ATTRAZIONE PRODUZIONI CINEMATOGRAFICHE (POR FESR LAZIO 2014-2020) and FONDO REGIONALE PER IL CINEMA E L'AUDIOVISIVO with the participation of WALLONIA produced with the help of FILM AND AUDIOVISUAL CENTER OF WALLONIA BRUSSELS FEDERATION with the support of the Tax Shelter of the Belgian Federal Government CASA KAFKA PICTURES MOVIE TAX SHELTER EMPOWERED BY BELFIUS in association with AMER developed with the support of CREATIVE EUROPE PROGRAMME - MEDIA OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

## CREW

Written and directed by  
Produced by

Associate producer  
Executive producer  
Original music and  
arrangements  
Vocals  
Cinematography  
Editing  
Production design

Costumes  
Sound engineering  
Sound design  
Sound mix  
Line producer  
Delegate producers

First assistant director  
Casting

Susanna Nicchiarelli  
Marta Donzelli  
Gregorio Paonessa  
Joseph Rouschop  
Valérie Bournonville  
Philippe Logie  
Alessio Lazzareschi  
Gatto Ciliegia  
contro il Grande Freddo  
Trine Dyrholm  
Crystal Fournier  
Stefano Gravero  
Alessandro Vannucci  
with Igor Gabriel  
Francesca & Roberta Vecchi  
Adriano Di Lorenzo  
Marc Bastien  
Franco Piscopo  
Gian Luca Chiaretti  
Serena Alfieri  
Karim Cham  
Ciro Scognamiglio  
Francesca Borromeo  
in collaboration with  
Gail Stevens  
Michael Bier