

CHAZ PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

# The man with 1000 faces

A FILM BY SONIA KRONLUND

HE IS A THORACIC SURGEON • ATHEIST  
PERFECT SPANISH MOTHER ATHLETE  
CULTIVATED ALEXANDRE IS GREAT RICH DANIEL  
RICARDO PHOTOGRAPHER ENGINEER  
DOCTOR SÃO PAULO MSF RELIGIOUS  
ARGENTINIAN ROMANTIC BRAZILIAN  
PEUGEOT A GOOD FRIEND CHARM QUICK  
UNEMPLOYED BUENOS PASSION WITTED TELECOM  
PLAYED AIRES HELPFUL CURIOUS MARRIED  
RENÉZ-VOUS ALL WAS FAKE AFRICA I FOLLOWED HIM

CHAZ PRODUCTIONS  
presents

# THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND FACES

L'HOMME AUX MILLE VISAGES

by Sonia Kronlund

RUNTIME : 1H30

▷ INTERNATIONAL SALES

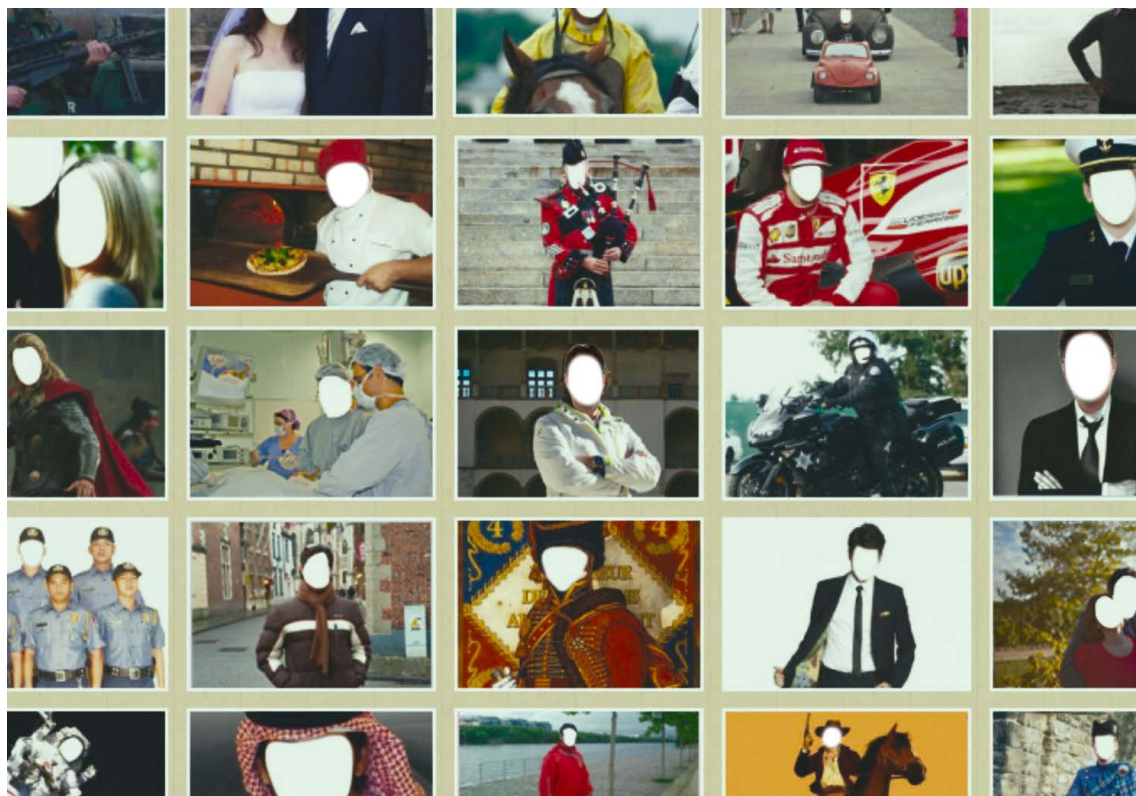
**PYRAMIDE**

32 rue de l'Échiquier,  
75010 Paris

+33 1 42 96 02 20

[sales@pyramidefilms.com](mailto:sales@pyramidefilms.com)

STILLS AND PRESSKIT DOWNLOADABLE ON [WWW.PYRAMIDEFILMS.COM](http://WWW.PYRAMIDEFILMS.COM)



He goes by the names of Alexandre, Ricardo or Daniel. He calls himself a surgeon or an engineer, Argentinean or Brazilian. He lives with four women at the same time, adapting his story and even his personality traits to each one. A first-person investigation, with the help of a private detective, into an impostor with a thousand imaginary lives.

## Interview with SONIA KRONLUND

### **This documentary film, which follows in the footsteps of a "serial lover," feels like a thriller...**

In this film, as in my work in general, I try to explore storytelling and the dramatization of personal experiences. The question was to build a narrative arc with a beginning, a middle and an end, based on a story that repeats itself, that unravels, with several characters. Only when I decided to film myself and my own quest, alongside these women, to find this man, did I find the way to generate dramatic tension. This tension gives the film its thriller feel, but it mostly echoes what I felt when I met the characters of this story, and when I discovered the extent of that man's sham.

### **You go even further: you bring up your own story, which resonates with those of these women...**

When I started writing the project for this documentary, I realized that I was obsessed with the question of lies and truth, which is at once a philosophical, moral and political issue. So I wasn't embarking on a journalistic investigation, I was rather telling a story by sorting out aspects of reality to create a film that is the fruit of a personal and committed approach. It is true that I felt genuine empathy for these women and that I felt close to some of them, whose lives echoed mine. By showing myself on screen, as I had done in my first feature documentary, *Nothingwood*,

I gave a piece of myself, just like these women gave a lot of themselves by exposing themselves to the camera or by telling their stories

### **How did you come across this story, or rather these stories?**

One of the victims is a friend of a friend. She contacted me to tell me her story. I couldn't get it out of my mind, and it made me want to meet other women involved. They knew each other, because they had gotten in touch to take joint action and try to get Ricardo convicted. This attempt failed, because Ricardo became threatening, some of them got scared and gave up. I had to build a trust relationship so that these women would accept to confide in me, while scrupulously respecting their conditions. Some of them requested that their anonymity be preserved. I was aware that I had to protect them, because I didn't want him to retaliate against them. So I had to put up a smokescreen by asking other women to play the parts of some of the victims, using the exact same words they had told me.

### **So you ended up directing actresses...**

I started out by gathering testimonies, writing lines, then I directed the actresses and I loved it! It seems to me that you cannot tell fact from fiction in the film. There is one professional actress among the women,



two non-professional actresses, one real witness in France and two in Brazil.

**Through this investigation into this “man with a thousand faces,” you also draw the portrait of women in love.**

They are wounded lovers, some of them are ashamed of having been in love, while others think that Ricardo is a genius. The film shows the fragility of women in their relationships. In one sequence, one of these women, who is a psychologist working with

teenagers, explains how being in love makes you lose all self-control.

**As a result, the shots showing sweet couples in the Sacré-Cœur gardens are tinged with irony...**

I wanted to show this picture-postcard Paris, which corresponds to the world in which Ricardo, a foreigner, tries to make these women live. He sets up dates at the Sacré-Cœur, he takes them to the Champs-Élysées or on the quays. He lives in a world of clichés and he likes to share it with his conquests.



It is as if his life was based on some image bank: he draws one or several stereotypes from it to adapt to each woman and each imaginary profession he takes on, thus creating some kind of little fiction.

**The power and joy of sisterhood run through your film.**

Lies and dissimulation allow Ricardo to divide people around him. That's one of his go-to techniques. In the film, I chose to focus instead on how solidarity can bring people together. I hope that the film exudes joy, that women will find in it something to mend at least their self-esteem, to heal by laughing a little, not by making fun maliciously, but still... That's the best we can do, really, because the law can't do anything about it.

**When Ricardo's face appears on screen, the film takes a turn that is equally humorous and disturbing...**

His victims had tried in vain to unmask him. And since some women had agreed to show their faces, to overcome their shame by taking part in the film, it didn't feel right to hide his face. It would have been unfair. So it was a deliberate choice on my part, perhaps a risky one, admittedly, but I couldn't ask those women to expose their story, their privacy, their weaknesses, without showing Ricardo's face. I owe them a lot.

**Why did you come up with this trick to film Ricardo at the end of your story?**

At the beginning, right up until the last moment, I was tempted to confront Ricardo by unmasking him



head-on. But one of the women was in such dire straits that I was afraid he would take it out on her, and I did not want to take the slightest risk.

**In front of him, you seem at once anxious and amused.**

I was worried stiff, but I went anyway. I felt a kind of responsibility and, to be honest, a part of it was also a game to me. Ricardo plays, then so will I! It was my turn to become an impostor, and I put myself in a fictional situation just like he does. But it is not that simple. It is difficult to lie, you are afraid of giving yourself away, of being exposed. So at one point, to feel more at ease, I thought that I would make it slightly more authentic, and I contacted several television networks in Krakow to offer them a real report on people who do business runs, which are marathons sponsored by their firms. Ricardo agreed to be filmed, and once we were face to face, he lied to

me so openly that I felt like a spectator, and therefore, relatively relaxed. I witnessed the making of his little fiction in real time, in front of the camera. It is quite fascinating to see someone lying so effortlessly and so shamelessly. One of the women told me that at a wedding, Ricardo, who pretended to be a surgeon then, met a real thoracic surgeon and struck up a conversation with her without losing countenance. The most surprising thing was that this woman came to him because she had been told that there was another surgeon among the guests. It was as if she had recognized him from afar, or as if Ricardo's confidence in his own lies gave him a semblance of credibility.

**The scene in the car raises ethical questions.  
What is your role inside the van, where we see  
you reacting to the scene in progress, but which  
is off-screen for Ricardo?**

I pondered a lot over this sequence, and I hope it will give the audience food for thought. Indeed, it raises moral questions about lies, deception and fiction. Can we do to others what we would not want done to ourselves? What do you do when the law cannot help you? How do you mend your self-esteem? Are revenge and mockery acceptable? These are questions raised by feminist movements in their own way, just like Act Up before them, when they resort to outings, name-and-shame campaigns, or accusations in the press for instance. In a way, I'm responding to this by proposing something minimal: mockery as the last resort weapon, or humour as a way to heal one's self-esteem, to overcome

humiliation. And then there's the question of the *deus ex machina* that is the director... With this film I discovered what directors can do: they can tell someone to do something, to run, to stop or to go on, to go up or down. And I was astonished to see that Ricardo obeyed these instructions. This power scared me a little, but I also enjoyed exercising it.







## SONIA KRONLUND

Sonia Kronlund is a graduate of the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure and has a degree in literature. She has collaborated on numerous screenplays, made documentaries, and directed several television collections. After a brief stint at Les Cahiers du Cinéma, she joined the radio in 1995 at France Inter (the most listened to radio station in France). Since 2002 she has produced the cult daily documentary programme "*Les Pieds sur Terre*" on France Culture radio station. Following *Nothingwood*, presented in the Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film Festival in 2017, *The Man With A Thousand Faces* is her second feature film as a director.

## CREW

Directed by	SONIA KRONLUND
Image	ZARA POPOVICI ALEXANDER NANAU FILIP DRÓŹDŹ
Editing	JULIEN POUPARD SOPHIE BRUNET GEORGE CRAGG
Sound	MATTHIEU PERROT ANNA ROK MICHAŁ FOJCIK
Assistant director	ANNA PAMUŁA
Producer	ELISABETH PEREZ
Co-producers	BEATA RZEŹNICZEK KLAUDIA ŚMIEJA-ROSTWOROWSKA
Executive producer	ALEXIS GENAUZEAU
Produced by	CHAZ PRODUCTIONS
In coproduction with	MADANTS FILMS SKP PRODUCTIONS BORD CADRE FILMS SOVEREIGN FILMS
With the support of	EURIMAGES CENTRE NATIONAL DU CINÉMA DE L'IMAGE ANIMÉE (CNC) LA RÉGION ILE-DE-FRANCE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CNC LA RÉGION CENTRE-VAL DE LOIRE, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CNC
The film is co-financed by	THE POLISH FILM INSTITUTE
With the support of	CINÉ+
In association with	CINÉMAGE 15
French Distribution	PYRAMIDE DISTRIBUTION
International Sales	PYRAMIDE INTERNATIONAL

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FRANCE | 2023 | 1H30 | DCP | 5.1 | 1.85 | COLOR

