

# SOUTHERN WINDS

(Maltese Title 'RIH ISFEL')



WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LOUISE C. GALIZIA  
PRODUCED BY FALKUN FILMS



*"In all our lives, there is a fall from innocence.  
A time after which, we are never the same."*

*-Gordie LaChance, Stand By Me*

## A short synopsis

On a remote village on the island of Gozo, high summer is shattered by the news that a boy has gone missing. In a town where nothing ever really happens, the news of a missing child unnerves even the most subdued of inhabitants. The investigation unravels through a local boy, Gianni, who is determined to find his friend and bring him home.

But his search leads him to uncover a lot more than he had wished for, as the village he thought he knew so well starts to reveal its deepest, darkest secrets.

# RIH ISFEL - THE STORY





It's the first day of the summer holidays: the kids burst through the school doors, rushing towards the sea and dive in, celebrating the end of the school year. A sense of freedom and adventure is in the air — anything seems possible in the safety and innocence of this small community. This is where we meet 12-year-old Gianni (*Johnny*), 9-year-old Pawlu, and 17-year-old Marco - An older boy with learning difficulties and Gianni's most loyal friend - along with their arch-enemy — 12-year-old Jason, from the dangerous Manwiel family.

The following day, Pawlu heads home from his beloved fishing spot when he suddenly disappears. The whole community sets out in search of him, including Gianni and his friends. They search far and wide, from their old campsites and swimming spots to their most familiar routes, all the while coming up with their own theories about what might have happened to their friend. They soon start to suspect Jason and most of all his cousin L-Ingliz, as the main culprit to Pawlu's disappearance and make several attempts to catch them out.

But the further they search, the more Gianni begins to realise the gravity of the situation, and the more he becomes secretly haunted by Pawlu's disappearance. As his suspicions grow, Gianni decides to dig deeper, wanting to search a cave L-Ingliz is suspected of using to store his loot.

But scared of getting into trouble with the Manwiel Family, his father stops him, leaving Gianni humiliated and disappointed in his father's show of weakness. His father sees this man and his family as dangerous, and no one ever interferes with their work, even when it's wrong. Gianni suddenly finds himself questioning his dad's principles, something he never thought he would do.

This seeping doubt begins to overwhelm Gianni when he discovers his father's secret ; That he is, in fact, Marco's biological father. The revelation shakes Gianni to the core and puts their relationship in jeopardy. A man who was once his hero is now flawed, and the veil of naivety that once protected Gianni's innocence is now gone, forcing him to face a new reality.

Gianni tries to cast aside his inner turmoil by focusing on finding his friend. When L-Ingliz kills Marco's dog, it becomes the catalyst for Gianni to reveal the man's involvement in Pawlu's disappearance. He suddenly finds himself working hand in hand with his arch-enemy, Jason, to find and rescue Pawlu.

As a summer storm looms over the small island, flooding its roads and caves, Gianni desperately tries to rescue Pawlu and bring him to safety. But he is too late. Pawlu's death forces Gianni, and the whole community, to reflect on their own roles in this tragic ending and what they could have done to prevent it.



THEME



An underwater photograph showing a hand reaching up towards the surface. The water is dark and murky, with light filtering down from above, creating a shimmering effect on the surface. The hand is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame, with fingers slightly curled. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

*"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil  
is for good men to do nothing"*

*-Unkown*

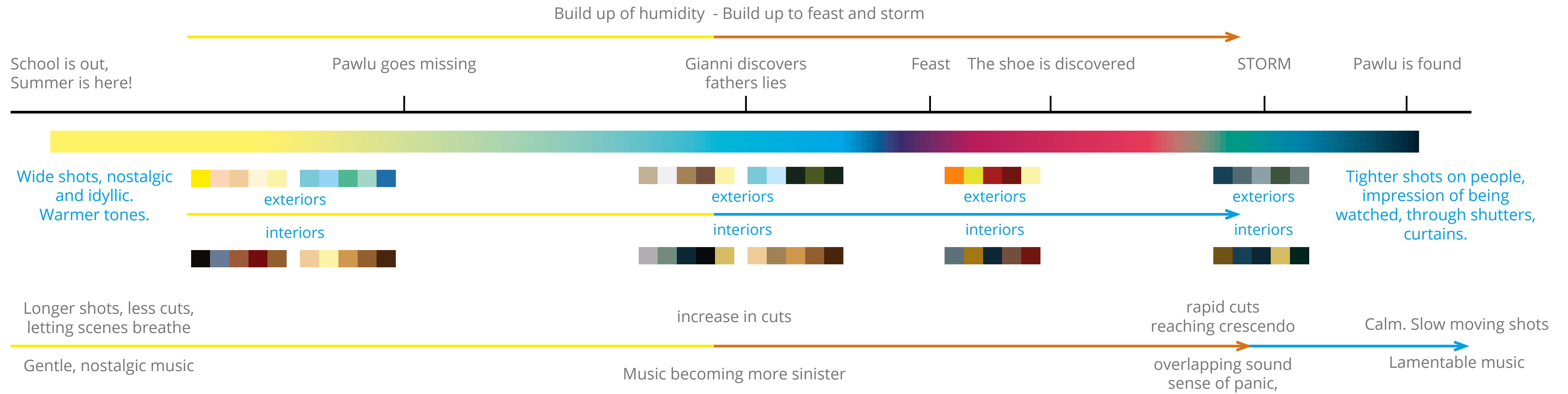
There is something truly unique about growing up on a small island, and that uniqueness only becomes more pronounced the longer one is away from it.

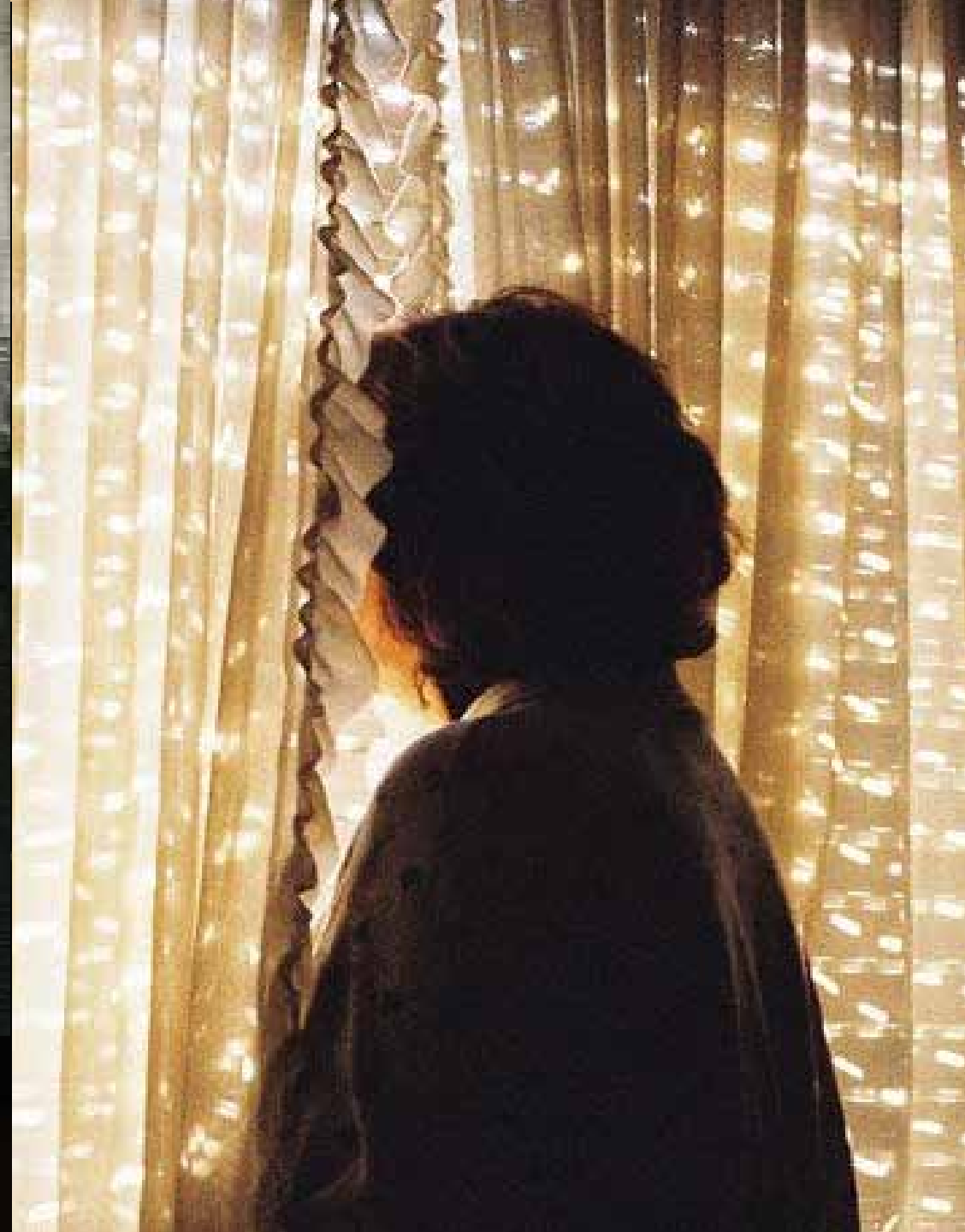
Small communities often carry a false sense of security, the belief that nothing truly bad can happen, that danger and cruelty exists elsewhere. Everyone lives side by side, assuming goodness in one another. Yet this story exposes a hidden truth: that people are rarely wholly good or bad, and that grey areas exist even in the smallest, quietest communities. Discovering this reality can be a defining moment in any adolescent's life, forcing us into an irreversible step into adulthood.

This theme underpins every creative decision in the film. The opening is designed to evoke nostalgia and freedom: the children have just begun their summer holidays and feel untethered from responsibility. The audience is invited into a tranquil world, encouraged to believe this peace is permanent.

As the story unfolds, this comfort begins to erode. Pawlu's disappearance marks the shift. The oppressive summer humidity becomes a ticking clock, building toward both the coming storm and the town's feast. Visually, the film tightens; frames close in, bodies crowd together, and the audience becomes an eavesdropper, listening to private conversations through open windows and sheer curtains as Gianni uncovers the truths hidden within the community.

# Tonal evolution including Colour, Cinematographic and musical transition





# Director's Statement

The film's aesthetic will be focused on creating a timeless world, one untouched by modern technology, allowing us to view the community as isolated and alone. It will create a sense of nostalgia, allowing us to yearn for a time gone by, a time of innocence and youth. This will mirror Gianni's deep resistance to the inevitable transition to adulthood and his own denial of the truth.

We also want to create an illusion of safety through its tranquil existence, one in which nothing ever really happens. The aesthetic will also underscore the theme of loss that runs deeply through the narrative. From Pawlu's disappearance to Gianni's gradual loss of innocence and youth, this sense of absence will be woven into every frame.

We'll emphasise this through the use of negative space, with shots that deliberately leave areas unoccupied, creating a palpable void. Moments will be framed with a haunting emptiness, where characters are positioned as if always leaving room for someone who is no longer there.

This approach will visually echo the pervasive feeling of loss, making it an everpresent element in the story's unfolding.

# THE MONSTER WITHIN



Gianni's own torment of finding Pawlu will materialise through the appearance of a dark monster, lurking in the well or in the corner of Gianni's room, acting as a metaphor to his own dread of things to come. This will be directly inspired by the monsters and demons found in Maltese folklore tales, and be constructed in a tactile way; using puppetry and paper mache figures that are found in the local carnival scene. Gianni is on the verge of adulthood, symbolising that loss of innocence and naivety that he clings onto so dearly. He is fighting his own coming of age, and by letting go of Pawlu, he is letting go of youth, and facing that fear head on. This is what these demons will symbolise to him- taunting him, challenging him until he cannot ignore them any more.



*'Ara gejjja l-Mewt ghalik biex tixwik, biex taqlik'*

*(Hey watch out for here comes death,  
to burn you and to fry you)*

# Casting - children

Casting the children will happen close to shooting date, to not risk having to recast further down the line, with most of them being made up of non professional actors.

The most important aspect of this casting will be chemistry. These boys have to show a familiarity between themselves, with strong group dynamics. We will therefore look at casting as individuals, and then as an ensemble cast, trying out different options and dynamics to see what works best.

As part of the casting process they will get to spend time together, getting to know each other, with the most amicable scenes hopefully filmed closer to the end of filming, to allow that sense of camaraderie to build over time.

When casting Pawlu, we want to find someone who symbolises that purity and naivety that Gianni is holding onto. He will imbue that childlike innocence that we can all relate to, making his loss that much harder to bear. Gianni's casting will also have to have that childlike innocence, but on the cusp of adulthood. The casting will show an unspoken strength and determination, and a clear ability to lead without asking for it. The dynamic between Pawlu and Gianni will be essential in making that relationship more endearing. While Marco is written as having learning difficulties, we may be able to cheat his casting by casting someone older, who is able to portray his challenges with a sensitivity and understanding that is essential in portraying characters with these kind of difficulties.



# Producer's Statement

A coming of age story well told, is timeless. It has the power to transport the reader, or the viewer in our case, back in time.

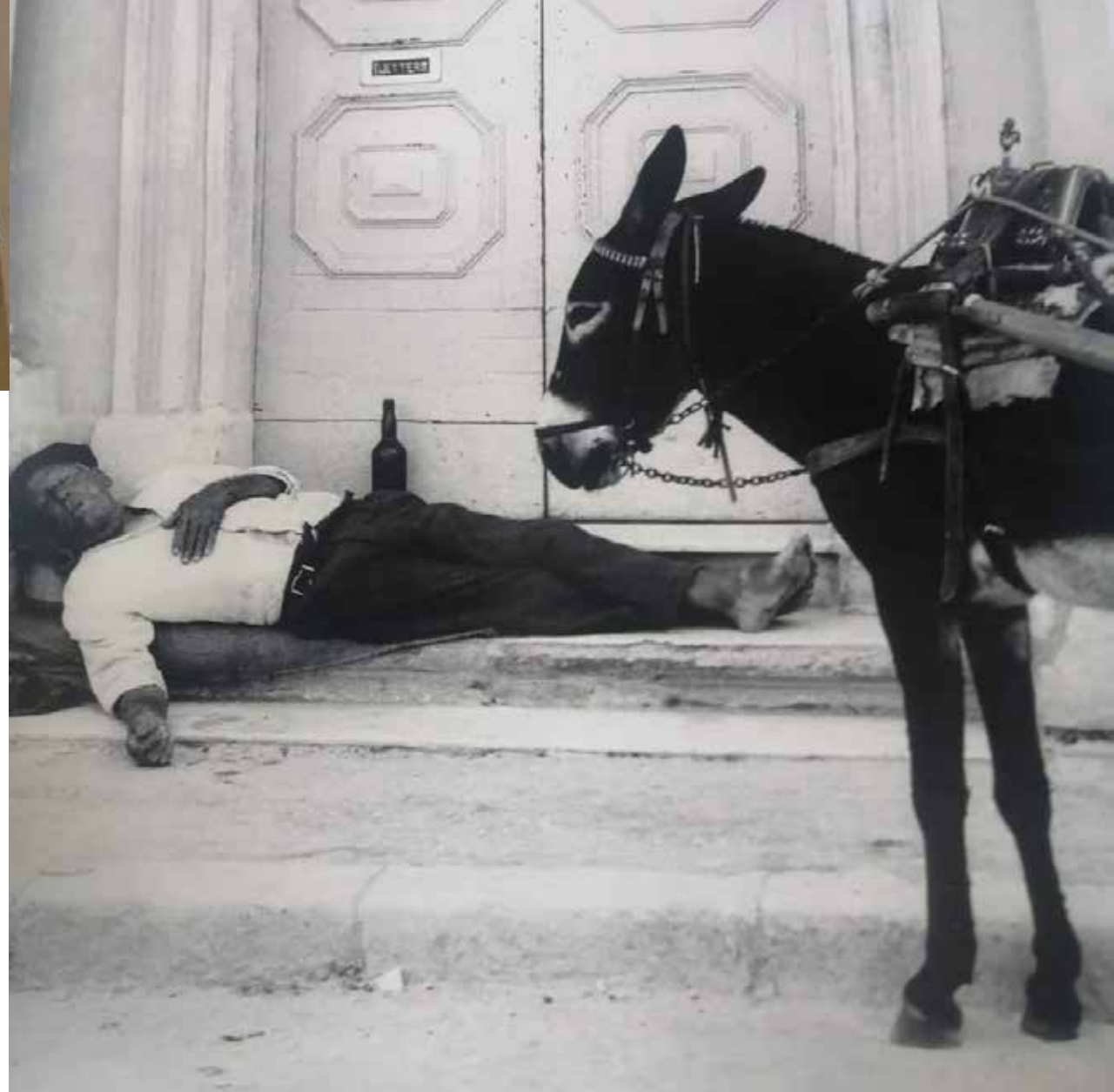
A specific moment in time which each and every one of us remembers in one way or another. The moment which places us at the cusp of change between childhood and adolescence or adolescence to adulthood.

Southern Winds is one such story. Capturing a time long lost but arousing within memories never forgotten. Pierre Mejlak's wonderful novel is being adapted by our director Louise and the aim is to re-visit a Gozo of the past. However, the themes remain present and alive as ever.

The simplicity of the times and the nostalgia that the story makes us feel for a time long gone, gives us a glimpse into our culture and are the backdrop to the heart of the story - the heartbreak of the loss of a child, a friend which transcends boundaries regardless of where or even the period when it is told. This is why we'd like to bring this story to life. Universal themes which apply irrespective of time are drawn out on the beautiful canvas of colours and textures that make up our beautiful islands.



# VILLAGE LIFE



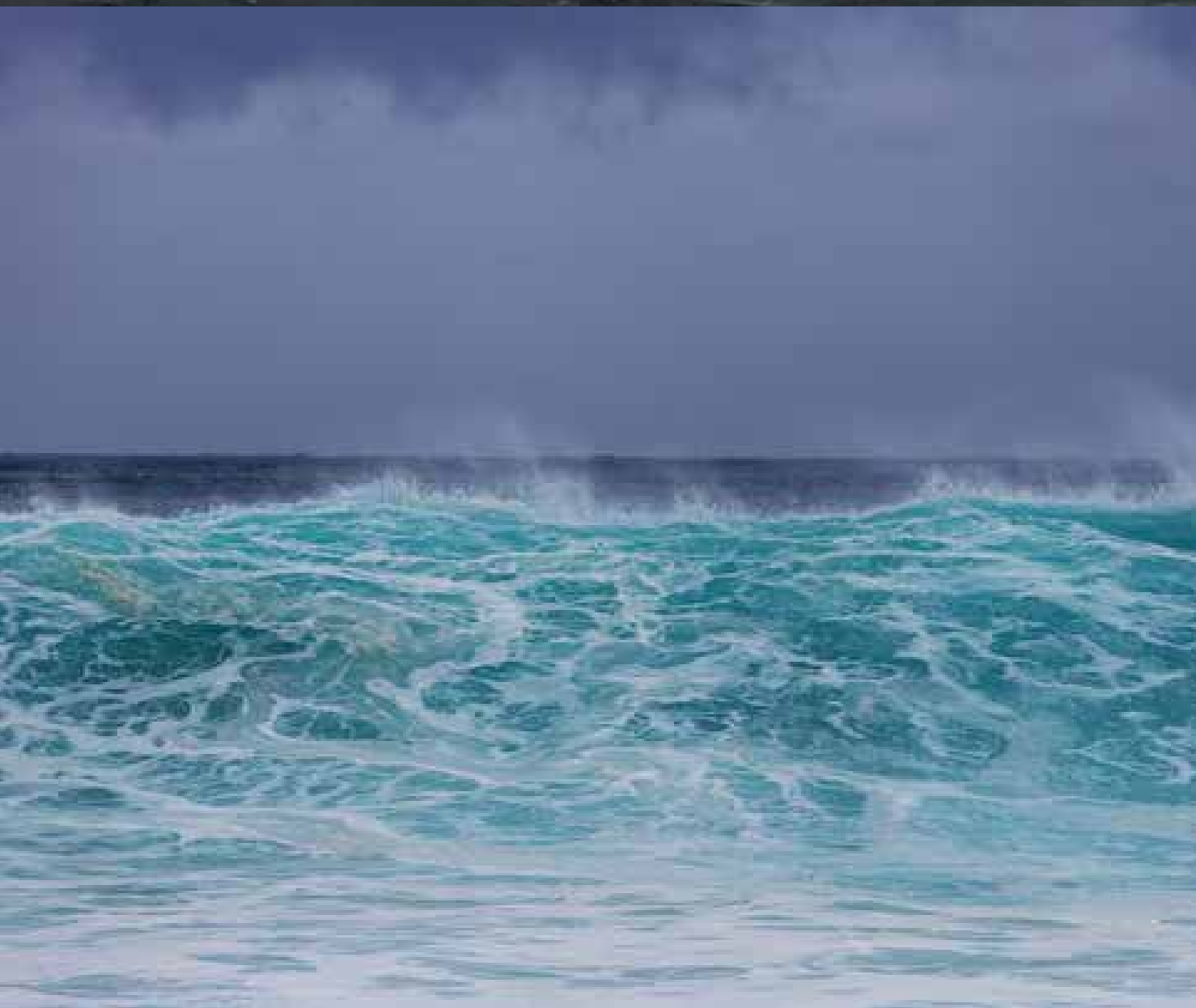
# MALTESE BAR



# FEAST



# STORM



# CAVE



# LOUISE C GALIZIA

## WRITER / DIRECTOR

Louise is a filmmaker based in London, UK, where she is currently in development on various short, feature and TV scripts. She grew up in Malta, first working as a designer and then working as an Assistant Director on TV and Feature films. When she moved to the UK she continued her work as an AD, before deciding to dedicate her time in developing her skills as a director. Since then she has directed, produced and sometimes written and edited numerous short films that have been screened in festivals around the world.

Her first short film *Pardon the Intrusion* went on to win awards around the globe, including Best Short Film and Women in Film award at Cleveland International FF 2015. It was also officially selected at Palm Springs Short Fest, Aesthetica, Short of the week and many more.

Her latest microshort film *A Walk Home* was officially selected for Depict 2021 as part of the Encounters film festival, The Berlin Microshorts FF, and the 225 film club at the BFI. She also has a short horror film screening at Scream fest 2024 in Los Angeles.

In these past few years, she has begun the process of writing her own scripts. This is due to her desire to focus on stories and aesthetics that she feels are truly representative of who she is as a director, and the kind of work that she wants to be creating in the future. Her first short script *Magic* went on to win 'best short screenplay under 10 mins' at the UK Film Festival, and has had two promo charity films that she both wrote and directed commissioned by Mediatrust.

In 2021 she was selected for Directors UK Inspire Programme, where she was mentored by TV Director and Exec Producer Iain B. Macdonald. She was then selected for Berlinale Talents Lab 2023, and has been accepted as a member of the European Academy 2023 and BAFTA Connect.

Website: <http://www.louisecgalizia.com/>

# PIERRE ELLUL

## PRODUCER

Pierre set up Falkun Films in Malta in 2007 to bring thought provoking and moving stories to the screen.

Pierre started his career in film in 1998 as an assistant director and has worked in the directorial teams of Ridley Scott, Alfonso Cuaron and Steven Spielberg. In 2006 he was nominated for a Directors Guild of America award for the film *Munich* as part of Spielberg's directorial team. Other selected credits in a production capacity include Oscar nominated *Kon-Tiki* (2011), the successful Danish film *All Inclusive* (2013) and *The Promise* (2015).

He produced the feature documentary *Dear Dom* (2011), about one of Malta's most controversial prime-ministers; which he also wrote and directed, a film which had the longest ever theatrical run for a documentary on the Maltese Islands. He is executive producer on the Sundance award winning film *Luzzu* (2021) and *Le Comte de Montecristo* (2024). He was the delegate producer on *Carmen* (2022), Malta's submission to the 95th Academy Awards, and co-produced *War Sailor* (2022), Norway's submission to the 95th Academy Awards, and the film *The Dive* (2023). He is an EAVE alumni and a European Film Academy member.

# ANIKA PSAILA SAVONA

## PRODUCER

Anika was involved in the setting up of Falkun Films. She brings with her an extensive legal and business affairs knowledge. Anika graduated as a lawyer from Malta and read for her masters at the University of Oxford. For fifteen years, Anika worked internationally in the corporate world, after which she moved into film production.

She is responsible for the business affairs of Falkun Film's projects including, amongst others, the Oscar-nominated *KonTiki*, *American Assassin*, *American Renegade* and *The Promise*. Anika also produced the feature documentary *Dear Dom*, *Carmen* (2022) Malta's submission to the 95th Academy Awards, and was Executive Producer on *Le Comte de Montecristo* (2024). She has also since co-produced *War Sailor* (2022) Norway's submission to the 95th Academy Awards and *The Dive* (2023).



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