

# ***THE SCARS OF ALI BOULALA***

*A Film by Max Eriksson*



Photo Courtesy: Patrick O'Dell

**\*\*\*World Premiere - Documentary Competition 2021 Tribeca Film Festival\*\*\***

Sisyfos Film Production in Co-production with Folk Film and SVT

With Support from

Swedish Film Institute, Western Norway Film Centre, Mediefondet Zefyr,  
Film Stockholm/Filmbasen, Swedish Arts Grants Council

Directed by: **Max Eriksson**

Written by: **Max Eriksson, Mikel Cee Karlsson**

Produced by: **Mario Adamson, Ashley J. Smith**

Co-Produced by: **Anita Norfolk**

Edited by: **Mikel Cee Karlsson**

Executive Produced by: **Ewan Bowman, Rebecca Bennett, Danielle Turkov, Ben Marks, Elliot James Perry, Amy Shepherd, Ruth Reid**

Featuring: **Ali Boulala, Rune Glifberg, Arto Saari, Ewan Bowman, Alex Moul, Dustin Dollin, Kevin "Spanky" Long, Erik Ellington**

RT: 100 minute feature film / 58 minute TV version

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**For more information, please contact:**

[EricaAbrams@Falcolnk.com](mailto:EricaAbrams@Falcolnk.com) | [AllisonLambdin@Falcolnk.com](mailto:AllisonLambdin@Falcolnk.com)

Falco Ink. | (212) 445-7100

## **TAGLINE**

Some wounds never heal.

## **LOGLINE/ SHORT SYNOPSIS**

In the 1990s, Ali Boulala is the most fearless and eccentric skateboarder of his generation. After a tragic accident, he discovers that the emotional wounds are the hardest to heal.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

Sixteen-year-old Ali Boulala is thrust into the heart of the global skateboarding scene when he is recruited onto a professional crew in the mid-1990s. He spends a decade touring the world with his teammates and living a life without limits. His creativity on the board and his reputation for partying gains Ali the status as the most fearless and eccentric skateboarder of his generation.

Everything changes in 2007 when Ali is involved in a tragic accident. He loses his ability to skate and must fight to build up his life again. Ali now lives a quiet life in the suburbs of Stockholm. He carries scars on his body and in his psyche – constant reminders of the accident that still haunts him. One day, an opportunity opens up for Ali to face his emotional demons head-on. He must decide if he is ready to confront his past, or if some wounds can't be healed.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I saw Ali sitting alone in a bar in Stockholm, I remembered hearing about the accident and the death of his best friend, his time in prison, and that he could no longer skate. He did not appear as the same larger-than-life man I knew of. The evidence of the years was visible on his face. The questions started spiraling in my mind: How does he cope with the loss of his best friend? How does he deal with guilt and responsibility? How does he handle losing the ability that has defined him? The film tells the story of Ali's rise and fall, as well as his path toward possible redemption. Archival material shot on a variety of formats chronicling Ali's years as a pro skater forms the base of the film. This material brings in viewers who may not be familiar with Ali and his legacy into the world of his past and introduces them to the central figures in Ali's life during that time. The feel of the film follows the punk ethos of the skate community by combining these collections of disparate scenes from multiple time periods, disparate audio-visual formats (ranging from fish-eyed lenses to Super-8 film stock), to disparate voices and points of view. Through the liveliness of this archival material from a time gone by, we get a vivid picture of what it was like for Ali to live a life without limits, and as such, we come to understand the profoundness of his loss. Slowly, we come to see a person of contradictions emerge: a contemplative, soft-spoken man with a wild past; a destructive perfectionist. The form of the film also takes on this duality through a combination of the high-energy of the past with the state of limbo of the present day.

- Max Eriksson

## FILMMAKER BIOGRAPHIES

### MAX ERIKSSON | DIRECTOR & CO-SCREENWRITER

Max Eriksson (born 1983) is a Swedish documentary filmmaker based in Stockholm. Originally from Helsingborg in the south of Sweden, Max found an interest in photography at a young age. His interest in the visual arts is what led him to become a fashion stylist. In this role, what Max found most rewarding was creating fashion imagery based on building characters and telling stories, as opposed to focusing on trends. His clients ranged from musical artists to fashion magazines and fashion shows.

Max has previously directed the short documentaries *Tivoliland* (2013) and *Shut Eyes* (2011). This is his first feature film.

### MARIO ADAMSON | PRODUCER

Mario Adamson is a producer and founder of Sisyfos Film Production, an independent production company based in Stockholm, Sweden and Edinburgh, Scotland that produces high-profile documentaries with a focus on creative collaborations with international and domestic directors and producers who have a unique voice, a high artistic ambition and share the passion for the art of cinematic storytelling.

Mario has produced and co-produced such internationally acclaimed films as the multiple award-winning documentary *Scheme Birds* by Ellen Fiske and Ellinor Hallin (Best Documentary Feature, Tribeca Film Festival, 2019), *Merry Christmas, Yiwu* by Mladen Kovacevic (Winner of the Heart of Sarajevo, 2020), *The Scars of Ali Boulala* (world premiere at Tribeca Film Festival, 2021), the animated short films *Still Born* (Swedish Academy Award 2015 and The Goldene Taube for Best Documentary Short in Leipzig, 2015). Mario is an alumnus of the EURODOC and Jihlava Emerging Producer programme, as well as the Sundance Institute Fund. He is originally a sound designer/composer with a career spanning four decades in the film industry.

### ASHLEY J. SMITH | PRODUCER

Originally from the United States, Ashley Smith joined Sisyfos Film Production in 2018. She has degrees in Cinema Studies from Suffolk University in Boston, USA and Stockholm University in Sweden. In 2018, she published her PhD dissertation on contemporary uses for archival home movies. Along with Mario Adamson, she is currently producing the feature documentaries, *The Scars of Ali Boulala* (directed by Max Eriksson, world premiere at Tribeca Film Festival, 2021), *Elevated* (directed by Gustav Littorin), *Don't Make It Easy* (directed by Charlotta Hayes), *The Chaplain* (directed by Clara Harris), and *Afterlife* (directed by Malin Nicander).

## **ANITA NORFOLK (FOLK FILM) | CO-PRODUCER**

Anita Norfolk is the founder of Folk Film, an independent production company in Bergen, Norway that focuses on creative documentaries and animation. Prior to founding Folk Film Anita worked for more than a decade in the UK. She spent five years in London at Mosaic Films working across content for online, festival and broadcast release. She was the development producer on the feature documentaries *Out of Thin Air* (Netflix, BBC Storyville) and *I am Samuel* (Sundance grantee, premiere Hot Docs 2020), and the series producer on *When I Worry About Things*, an animated documentary series on childhood mental health that won a Royal Television Society Award. In 2020, she was selected for the Berlinale Talents.

## **MIKEL CEE KARLSSON | CO-SCREENWRITER & EDITOR**

Mikel Cee Karlsson is a Swedish filmmaker and former professional skateboarder. In addition to directing and editing his three feature-length documentaries, he has made music videos for Fever Ray, José González, and Calexico, among others. Mikel is part of the highly acclaimed Plattform Produktion in Gothenburg. His award-winning documentary, *Greetings from the Woods*, premiered in competition at Locarno in 2009. *The Extraordinary Ordinary Life of José González* premiered in competition at Gothenburg Film Festival in 2010 and was also selected for Hot Docs 2011. His latest documentary, *A Stranger*, premiered in competition at CPH:DOX 2019 and was nominated for a Swedish Academy Award.

## CAST BIOGRAPHIES

**ALI BOULALA** (@theboulala) was born in Stockholm, Sweden to a Finnish mother and Algerian father. At 16, he moved to the United States to become a professional skateboarder sponsored by Flip. From an early age, he was characterized as always being the wildest and the craziest of anyone. Even though he no longer skates, he continues to live off of his former wild-child image in order to make a living. The tragedy of Shane's death continues to haunt him, and this grief is something that he carries with him as part of his punishment. Ali currently lives in Stockholm.

**SHANE CROSS** (@shanecrossforever – tribute page) was an Australian skateboarding prodigy characterized by his pathological aversion to showers and his infectious good humor. He was recruited to the Flip team, joining the world tour as a teen. Younger than many of the other skaters on the team, joining Flip was Shane's opportunity to skate alongside his childhood heroes. While Shane was known for his fun-loving personality, he came into Ali's life at a point when drug and alcohol use on the team had reached a breaking point. Their friendship was a space of light in the ever-darkening chaos of Ali's life. Shane died on March 7, 2007 while riding on the back of Ali's motorcycle while both were heavily intoxicated. The motorcycle hit a curb at 19 mph, throwing them both into a wall. This wall now features a memorial mural in Shane's memory. Shane was only 20 years old when he died.

**EWAN BOWMAN** (@bo\_def\_son) is a Scottish skater-turned-videographer who joined the Flip team in 2003. He accompanied the team on world tours in order to capture footage for Flip video productions such as *Really Sorry* and *Extremely Sorry*. He also acted as the tour manager, trying to bring order to the chaos of traveling with a van full of young guys who had no real responsibilities in life other than to occasionally skate. Ewan and Ali remain close friends to this day, with Ewan traveling to Stockholm to celebrate Ali's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. During this visit, Ewan reveals that Shane's father would like to meet Ali. Ewan currently lives in California.

**ARTO SAARI** (@artofoto) is a Finnish skateboarder who spent most of his professional career on the Flip team. In 2008, he left the team due to distress over Shane Cross's death. Arto has now been sober for almost 9 years. Arto currently lives in Hawaii.

**DUSTIN DOLLIN** (@therealdustindollin) is an anarchic Australian skateboarder who started his professional career riding for Baker Skateboards as a teen. He became the "mascot" of a group of skaters (which included Ali) who lived on Warner Avenue at Huntington Beach, California from 1998- 2000 and called themselves *Piss Drunx*. A 2001 *Rolling Stone* feature about the *Piss Drunx* described them as "the most dysfunctional degenerates to ever bust an ollie." Dustin currently lives in Paris.

**KEVIN "SPANKY" LONG** (@kevinspankylong) is an American professional skateboarder and illustrator who joined the Baker team in 2003 as a teenager. During a night of drinking in 2011, a friend lit Kevin's shirt on fire as a joke. The shirt was made of flannel and immediately went up in flames. Kevin suffered third-degree burns on his entire upper body. After escalated drinking and drug use, he is now sober. Kevin currently lives in California.

**RUNE GLIFBERG** (@runeglifberg) is a Danish skateboarder who turned pro at age 18 in 1992, riding for Flip. Now in his mid-40s, Rune will compete in the Tokyo Olympics (scheduled for 2021). This is the first time skateboarding is included as a competitive Olympic sport. Rune currently lives in Copenhagen.

**ERIK ELLINGTON** (@erikellington) is an American professional skateboarder and co-founder of Baker Skateboards. Now sober, he was also a founding member of the Piss Drunx. Eric currently lives in California.

**ALEX MOUL** (@moulyalx) is a UK-born skater who became a pro at age 12. He and Ali were the original tenants at the Warner Avenue apartment in Huntington Beach. Alex currently lives in California.

## **END CREDITS**

### **Featuring (in order of appearance)**

Ali Boulala  
Raija Boulala  
Omar Boulala  
Rune Glifberg  
Arto Saari  
Ewan Bowman  
Alex Moul  
Dustin Dollin  
Kevin "Spanky" Long  
Erik Ellington  
Shane Cross  
Amanda Boulala  
Peggy Boulala

### **Directed by**

Max Eriksson

### **Written by**

Max Eriksson & Mikel Cee Karlsson

### **Produced by**

Mario Adamson & Ashley J. Smith

### **Co-Produced by**

Anita Norfolk

### **Executive Producers**

Ewan Bowman  
Rebecca Bennett  
Danielle Turkov  
Ben Marks  
Elliot James Perry  
Amy Shepherd  
Ruth Reid

### **Edited by**

Mikel Cee Karlsson



**Directors of Photography**

Jonas Embring

Ivan Blanco

Iga Mikler

**Additional Photography by**

Michael Parry

Majaq Julén

Geoff Campbell

Max Eriksson

**Original Music Written and Performed by**

Warren Ellis

**Additional Music by**

Alex Zhang Hungtai & Pierre Guerineau

**Art Direction**

Martin Falck

**Sound Recordists**

Jonas Goldman

Mario Adamson

**Production Assistants**

Clara Harris

Kajsa Dines

Julie Tuchais

**Sound Post Production**

Thomas Angell Endresen

Yngve Leidulv Sætre

**Sound Designers**

Thomas Angell Endresen

Yngve Leidulv Sætre

**Foley Artist**

Claes Lundberg

**Mix**

Duper Studio & Bergen Kino

**Post Production Coordinator**

Sergio C. Ayala

**Picture Post-production**

Rebel Unit

**Colorist**

Mats Andersen

**Technician**

Ulrikke Skjold

**Additional Photo**

Øystein Fyxe

**Accounting**

Maria Christiansson & Malin Andersson / Maredo Ekonomi

**Auditing**

Emma Johansson / Delta Revision

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Emil Wiklund / Little By Little Legal & Business Affairs

**Music Supervisor**

Rasmus Thord

**Music Coordinator**

Dustin Dollin

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**Marketing & Festivals Coordinator**

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**Acquisitions Manager & Sales Coordinator**

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**Marketing & Social Media**

Joanna Solecka / Alphapanda

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**Trailer Editor**

Giorgos Georgopoulos / Asterisk

**Public Relations**

Falco Ink.

**Impact Production Partner**

Think-Film

**Impact Producers**

Danielle Turkov

Amy Shepherd

Ben Marks

Elliot James Perry

**A Sisyfos Film Production**

**In Co-Production with**

Folk Film

&

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Controller Jenny Örnborn

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**Music Used with Permission**

The Prodigy – Breathe

(K. Flint / L. Howlett / K. Palmer)

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Symphony No. 9 in D minor, Op, 125 “Choral”: II. Scherzo (Molto vivace)

(Ludwig van Beethoven)

Performed by Philharmonica Slavonica, Conducted by Eugen Duvier

Licensed by One Media iP Ltd / Point Classics

Not Alright

(Eric Palmqwist)

Performed by Eric Palmqwist

© Eric Palmqwist

Alex Zhang Hungtai & Pierre Guerineau – You Can’t Put Your Arms Around a Memory

(Johnny Thunders)

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### **Archival Material Courtesy of**

Erik Abrahamsson, Dustin Aron, Ali Boulala, Amanda Boulala, Omar Boulala, Ewan Bowman, Henrik Carleson, Mia Carlsson, Olivier Chassignole, Su Young Choi, Dustin Dollin, Flip Skateboards, Thomas Gentsch, Theo Hand, Wing Ko, Chris Middlebrook, Antton Miettinen, Fred Mortagne, Robin “Boon” Nilssen, Sanna Nilsson, Patrick O’Dell, Ben Powell, Andrew Reynolds, J Strickland, Jean-Pascal Strüwer, Timi Valo

Footage from Flip “Sorry” courtesy of Fred Mortagne and Flip Skateboards. Footage from Flip “Really Sorry” and “Extremely Sorry” courtesy of Flip Skateboards.

Footage from “Skate” used with permission of Electronic Arts Inc.

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