

Diverse International Cast for Big-Budget Euro Series 'The Swarm' (Exclusive)

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Cécile de France ('The New Pope'), Sharon Duncan-Brewster ('Sex Education'), Takuya Kimura ('2046'), Lydia Wilson ('Flack'), and German star Barbara Sukowa ('Hannah Arendt') are among the ensemble cast for the environmental thriller series based on the Frank Schätzing best-seller.



'The Swarm' ZDF/Julian R. Wagner/Leif Haenzo

The Swarm, the big-budget series based on the Frank Schätzing best-seller, has signed up a global cast of stars and up-and-comers for the eight-part environmental thriller.

European actors, including Cécile de France (*The New Pope*), Sharon Duncan-Brewster (*Sex Education*), Jack Greenlees (*Star Wars – The Last Jedi*), Lydia Wilson (*Flack*), Krista Kosonen (*Blade Runner 2049*), Alexander Karim (*Dying of the Light*), Leonie Benesch (*Babylon Berlin*) and German star Barbara Sukowa (*Hannah Arendt*) will join the likes of Japan's Takuya Kimura (*I Came With the Rain*) and Takehiro Hiera (*Giri/Haji*), Americans Rosabell Laurenti Sellers (*Game of Thrones*) and Dutch Johnson (*Veep*), and Canadian Joshua Odjick (*Unsettled*) for the series, which has begun shooting in Italy.

Game of Thrones producer Frank Doelger, who is executive producing *The Swarm* through Intaglio Films (a joint venture between German outfits Beta Cinema and ZDF Enterprises), together with Eric Welbers of Germany's ndF IP, said one of the prime challenges in setting up the adaptation of Schätzing's 2004 novel was "to reimagine the characters to reflect the increasing diversity of the scientific community. This allowed us to put together a cast which I believe would have been unimaginable in 2004 when the novel was written."

Oscar-nominated producer Mark Huffam (*The Martian*, *Saving Private Ryan*), is producing *The Swarm* together with *Killing Eve*'s Ute Leonhardt, with Schätzing and Till Groenemeyer serving as executive producers. Friedemann Goetz and Charlotte Groth are producing for ndF. ZDF commissioning editors include Frank Zervos, Burkhard Althoff and Alexandra Staib.

Series directors include Luke Watson (*Ripper Street*), Barbara Eder (*Barbarians*) and Philipp Stölzl (*North Face*).

Schätzing's novel, which has been translated into 27 languages worldwide, chronicles the struggle of humankind against an unknown swarm intelligence that lives in the depths of the sea. When humanity's pollution and wanton exploitation of the seas disturb this mysterious collective, it strikes back, threatening all human life on earth. The fate of the world rests in the hands of a small group of scientists.

Doelger and Schätzing adapted the novel for the screen. Steven Lally (*Strike Back*) and Marissa Lestrade (*Deep State*) penned the screenplay together with Chris Lunt (*Prey*) and Michael A. Walker (*Devils*). Polar and deep-sea researcher Professor Antje Boetius of the Alfred-Wegener-Institute Helmholtz-Centre for Polar and Marine Research and Dr. Jon Copley of the University of Southampton, United Kingdom act as scientific advisors on the series.

"It was important to me, that we don't simply adapt *The Swarm* for the screen, but rather modernize it," said Schätzing. "An interpretation for the days to come, that puts the lives, fears and hopes of younger generations center stage ... The scripts are written, now actors, directors, DOPs and visual effects artists are taking over. I am eager to see what will happen and will likely sneak onto the set, to maybe play a fish. Or at least, a white crab."

"After three years of intense preparation and a year of delay due to the COVID crisis, the film adaptation of *The Swarm* is finally getting off the ground," said ZDF's Zervos. "The series will be state-of-the-art: emotional, close to the present, diverse, as well as scientifically and technologically up to date. In doing so, we want to create a feeling that the story is happening here and now, not in some future."

Welbers noted that in keeping with the book's environmental themes, *The Swarm* will be a green production, with much of the pan-global action being recreated in post-production and the book's underwater sequences being done not on the high-seas, but in a tank in Belgium, where *The Swarm* cast will shift to following the summer shoot in Italy.