The answers to life's mysteries
can be found in the gutter

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WE ARE STARDUST

A film by
Elisabeth
Rasmussen

ARCTIC FILM NORWAY · COPENHAGEN FILM COMPANY · DR · FILMSKOLEN · dok.incubator · BUNKER 47 · MONTAGU · Nordisk Film & TV Fond · KUZA

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SHORT SYNOPSIS

The answers to life's mysteries can be found in the gutter

For decades, astronomers around the world have spent billions searching the universe for stardust, hoping to unlock the mysteries of life. Jon Larsen, a jazz music artist and true renaissance man, had the audacity to simply look down. He claims to have found stardust in the gutter, right here on Earth. But his discovery is dismissed and ridiculed by the scientific establishment.

What if Jon's stardust proved to be real?

Film director Elisabeth, in search of her Sámi heritage, is irresistibly drawn to Jon's unlikely quest and decides to join him. Can their friendship bridge the gap between ancient wisdom and modern science?

LONG SYNOPSIS

The quest of two unlikely characters who embark on a journey to explore our connection to the stars.

For decades, scientists have spent billions searching outer space and the remotest places on Earth for stardust – tiny particles formed at the birth of our solar system. Norwegian jazz guitarist and amateur geologist Jon Larsen took a radically different approach: he searched for them in urban gutters.

After years of experimentation, Jon develops a method to identify genuine micrometeorites among terrestrial debris. His claims are initially met with scepticism and ridicule. Yet his persistence leads to international recognition, global media coverage, and collaboration with leading cosmologists. Eventually, even NASA scientists acknowledge that his rooftop method could revolutionise research in the field.

Filmmaker Elisabeth Rasmussen begins documenting Jon's journey while exploring her own existential questions rooted in Sámi mythology and childhood memories of starry skies in the Arctic.

Interweaving a decade of observational footage, intimate conversations, interviews with leading scientists and breathtaking microscopic imagery, We Are Stardust moves from electron microscope laboratories to Nordic landscapes and into the vastness of the cosmos. Through innovative VFX and microscopic photography, the film reveals extraordinary beauty within particles invisible to the naked eye.

At its heart, the film is an underdog story – a love letter to citizen science, human resilience, and the universal desire to understand where we come from.

C H A R A C T E R S

Jon Larsen

Citizen Scientist / Jazz Guitarist

As a boy, Jon was forever coming home with his pockets filled to the brim with strange rocks, stones and gems, taking them to his local geology lab for identification. That lifelong curiosity led him to an extraordinary claim, that cosmic dust, stardust, could be found all around us in the urban environment. For seven years the scientific establishment dismissed his findings, but Jon refused to take no for an answer, ultimately revolutionising the field of micrometeorite research. Today he studies micrometeorites full-time as a guest researcher at the University of Oslo. Jon is also Norway's most prominent jazz guitarist, having produced more than 600 jazz records, founded Hot Club de Norvège, and received the national Buddy Award for his lifetime contribution to jazz.

Jan Braly Kihle

Mineralogist / Photography Pioneer

Jan Braly Kihle is a Norwegian mineralogist. A professional geologist at the Institute for Energy Technology, Jan's own fascination with rocks began as a teenager when he sold a crystal specimen to Oslo's Geological Museum. When Jon needed someone who could help him photograph his micrometeorites to share his findings, Jan was the natural choice. Together they invented a pioneering microscope camera capable of photographing micrometeorites in spectacular colour for the first time, revealing the astonishing beauty of particles older than the Solar System itself. Their images have been exhibited in galleries in New York and Berlin and featured in The New York Times, National Geographic and The Economist.

Dr. Matthew Genge

Planetary Scientist / Imperial College London

Dr. Matthew Genge is an Associate Professor in Earth and Planetary Science at Imperial College London, where he works within the Planetary Science Group. One of the world's foremost experts on micrometeorites, he has published extensively on cosmic dust, atmospheric entry heating and the chemistry of extraterrestrial particles. A member of the cosmic dust subcommittee of NASA AARB and a contributor to the Stardust mission, Genge was among the first scientists Jon Larsen approached with his urban micrometeorite discoveries, and one of the most sceptical. His rigorous verification of Jon's samples in January 2016, using electron microscopy at Imperial College, transformed him from fierce critic to believer and gave Jon's work the scientific credibility it needed to reach the world.

Dr. Mike Zolensky

Planetary Scientist / NASA Johnson Space Center

Dr. Mike Zolensky is a planetary scientist and Cosmic Dust and Stardust Curator at NASA’s Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas. Over a career spanning more than four decades, he has served as curator for some of NASA’s most ambitious sample return missions, including Stardust, Hayabusa and Hayabusa2, and has published over 1200 papers on the mineralogy of comets, asteroids and cosmic dust. A Fellow of both the Meteoritical Society, the Mineralogical Society of America, and the American geophysical union, he has a minor planet, 6030 Zolensky, named in his honour. In the film, Zolensky is among the first to recognise that Jon’s method of collecting micrometeorites from urban rooftops could revolutionise the field. The moment reaches an absurd and joyful peak when Jon invites Zolensky and his NASA colleagues onto the roof of the Johnson Space Center, where they gather samples of stardust.

Prof. Don Brownlee

Astronomer / University of Washington

Prof. Don Brownlee is Professor Emeritus of Astronomy at the University of Washington and one of the most influential figures in the study of cosmic dust. He is best known as Principal Investigator of NASA's Stardust mission, which launched in 1999 and returned to Earth in 2006 carrying the first samples ever collected from a comet, and the first U.S. sample return from beyond the Moon. His contributions have been recognised with the J. Lawrence Smith Medal from the National Academy of Sciences, the Leonard Medal from the Meteoritical Society, and the NASA Medal for Exceptional Scientific Achievement. Elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1995, he is also co-author of the influential "Rare Earth" hypothesis with palaeontologist Peter Ward. Both an asteroid, 3259 Brownlee, and a mineral, brownleeite, bear his name. In the film, Brownlee provides the grand scientific context for Jon's work, connecting the tiny particles found in city gutters to humanity's oldest question: where do we come from?

Prof. Martin Bizzarro

Cosmochemist / University of Copenhagen

Prof. Martin Bizzarro is a cosmochemist and Professor at the Globe Institute, University of Copenhagen, where he directs the Centre for Star and Planet Formation (STARPLAN). Originally from Canada, he earned his PhD from the Université du Québec à Montréal in 2003 before establishing one of Europe's leading isotope geochemistry laboratories in Denmark. His research uses nucleosynthetic isotope fingerprints to trace the origin and evolution of planetary systems, with landmark publications in Nature and Science on rapid terrestrial planet formation and the delivery of water and other volatiles to Earth. His work has been cited over 12,000 times and supported by multiple European Research Council grants. In the film, Bizzarro provides the cosmochemistry dimension, explaining how the micrometeorites Jon finds on rooftops are ancient building blocks of our solar system, carrying clues about how planets formed and how the ingredients for life arrived on Earth.

KEY THEMES

The Outsider Who Changed Science

Jon Larsen is not a trained scientist but a jazz guitarist obsessed with a seemingly impossible idea: that cosmic dust exists in urban gutters. Driven by relentless curiosity, he makes a discovery that reshapes micrometeorite research. His journey from ridicule to recognition by researchers at NASA and Imperial College becomes a story about who gets to participate in science. *We Are Stardust* shows how breakthroughs can emerge from the margins — a tribute to stubborn curiosity and citizen science.

The Human Place in the Universe

We Are Stardust is a cinematic reflection on humanity's place in the cosmos and our urge to understand our origins. The micrometeorites Jon collects, ancient, real stardust older than the solar system, connect everyday urban spaces to the birth of the universe. Through his discoveries and encounters with leading astrophysicists, the film turns a scientific search into a meditation on curiosity, wonder, and what it means to be human.

Myth and Science — Two Ways of Understanding the Same Mystery

Inspired by Sámi creation stories that speak of life originating from the stars, the film gently weaves ancestral imagination together with modern cosmology. Rather than positioning myth and science as opposites, *We Are Stardust* reveals them as parallel expressions of the same timeless human longing: to understand our origins. This intersection expands the film beyond scientific discovery into a broader cultural and philosophical terrain, honouring multiple ways of knowing while inviting audiences into a shared sense of wonder.

Seeing the Invisible — A Documentary of Rare Visual Scope

Featuring never-before-seen images of micrometeorites captured through Jon and Jan's pioneering microscope-camera, *We Are Stardust* reveals particles older than Earth in striking detail. Blending long-term observational filmmaking with poetic visuals and a transcendent score, the film becomes a character-driven documentary — at once scientific discovery, cosmic reflection, and a testament to human perseverance.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I was a little girl, I used to stand alone in the snow on clear nights, looking up, hoping the aurora borealis would appear. Growing up in the Arctic Circle, where winters are long and dark, I developed an early fascination with the dots of light out there in space. I felt connected to the stars. I remember hearing an old Sámi myth about life beginning in the stars.

It's perhaps not so strange that when, in 2016, I heard about a man searching rooftops for stardust, an almost childish intrigue took hold of me. I needed to know more. Stardust… the stuff of magic? Who was this guy? I had to know more and decided to call the man himself, who turned out to be Norwegian jazz musician Jon Larsen. He told me he had developed a method to find stardust because, as I learned, stardust isn't just the stuff of magic and fairy tales; it is in fact very real and supposedly lands all around us.

About 4.6 billion years ago, our solar system was created from a rotating cloud of interstellar gas and dust. Some of the particles still float around in space, and when they hit the Earth's atmosphere, they rain down upon us. Scientists have eagerly been trying to get hold of these particles in order to solve the mysteries of our existence.

I want to take our audience on a journey with a man that does not give up on his "outside the box" thinking, even when everything seems impossible.

As a director, I must admit one of my main concerns was whether a story about stardust would seem too strange. How could I tell a story larger than life itself? Then I realised that Jon, through his quest for answers, also became like my long-lost brother. His passion to find out the truth about the fascinating role stardust played in the creation of life unfolds through his discoveries and meetings with scientists. His quest for our oldest ancestors – the micrometeorites – also inspired me to go on a quest of my own: exploring my Sámi heritage.

We Are Stardust is not a pure science film: it is a character-driven film about our deep desire to understand where we came from. Jon is shown as an ordinary man with an extraordinary mission. I want the audience to connect to his humanity and be inspired by his conviction. I aim to approach the story in a naturalistic manner, leaving room for candid beats of authentic moments. This will be accompanied by stunning space footage/VFX, AI-assisted VFX, and archives. Our composer is creating a soundtrack that, in addition to the characters, will also serve the wider world of the film – it captures the wonder of Norway's vast landscapes, the quiet intensity of scientific pursuits and the pulse of the world's great cities, as well as the universe and the creation of life. The music will move hand in hand with the editing and guide the audience through emotional peaks and valleys, at the same time uniting the film's central themes of curiosity, endurance and the human urge to explore.

The audience will witness the magic unfold through Jon's perspective and mine on this unlikely quest. I want to share the excitement and zest for discovering stardust that Jon's micrometeorites reawakened in me. The connection I felt to the stars as a little girl was perhaps more real than I understood at the time. We are all part of something bigger, we are all connected. And that is magical, if you ask me.

Elisabeth Rasmussen

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT

I met Elisabeth Rasmussen at a networking event in the Arctic North of Norway. When she told me the story of Jon Larsen – a jazz guitarist who claimed to have found stardust in the gutter, only to be laughed out of the room by the scientific establishment – I didn't hesitate. I immediately signed on to work with her.

What struck me then, and what I believe makes this film so compelling, is that it does something rare: it makes science genuinely accessible to a broad audience. Viewers discover something they have almost certainly never heard before – that cosmic dust rains down on us every day, and that one determined man proved these particles could be found right on his rooftop, while NASA spent billions trying to collect them in space. You don't need a science degree to be captivated by that story. You simply need curiosity.

But We Are Stardust is far more than a science documentary. At its heart, it is a deeply personal, character-driven film with universal themes: the underdog who refuses to give up, the quest to understand where we come from, and the profound question of what connects us to the cosmos and to one another. Jon's journey is intertwined with Elisabeth's own – a Sámi filmmaker in search of her heritage and place in the universe. Together, their stories create something that resonates beyond the world of science and into the territory of what it means to be human.

Jamie Hever
Bunker 47

WHO IS BEHIND

Elisabeth Rasmussen

Writer / Director / Producer

Elisabeth Rasmussen is a Sámi-Norwegian filmmaker and founder of Wonderline Productions. She sold her debut The Heart of Bruno Wizard to Netflix and SVT after 30 global festival screenings and her personal short Phoenix went on to NRK and Altibox after being nominated best documentary at the Academy Award® –qualifying Norwegian shortfilm festival. She has directed Gullruten award-nominated TV, co-produced features and writes for Grist and on occasion Elle. We Are Stardust is her second feature as a director.

Ash Jenkins

Editor

Ash Jenkins began his career in 2005 with acclaimed British filmmaker Nick Broomfield, culminating in his editing of the docudrama Battle for Haditha for Film4. He travelled to Kabul to work on his first feature documentary, Afghan Star, which screened at Sundance Film Festival in 2009, winning both the World Cinema Directing and World Cinema Audience awards. His skill in crafting narrative has seen him edit a number of films for Netflix.

Jamie Hever

Producer

Jamie Hever started his career in TV 17 years ago and has been part of creating titles that have aired on all major UK broadcast channels. His work has been selected for the Cannes Film Festival. He founded Bunker 47, an independent London-based production and distribution company with a catalogue of 350 hours of programming licensed across more than 100 territories, with extensive international production and distribution experience.

Benedikte Bredesen

Producer

Benedikte Bredesen works as a producer at f(x) productions, producing high-quality documentary films and series for cinema, festivals and TV/streaming. Her work has won Prix Europa twice for Best Documentary Film in Europe (The Snow Ball War and Hussain's Butcher Shop) and several Gullruten awards in Norway.

Ulrik Gutkin

Producer

Ulrik Gutkin is Managing Director and partner at Copenhagen Film Company Short & Doc. Before founding the company, he spent fifteen years at DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation). He studied Film, TV and Media Science at the University of Copenhagen and completed continuing professional development courses at the National Film School. He is an EAVE Producers Workshop graduate (2014) and a member of the European Film Academy.

Philip Owusu

Composer

Philip Owusu is a Copenhagen based composer, songwriter, producer and vocalist whose releases as an artist and producer have received critical acclaim, spanning both collaborative projects and solo recordings. In film, he has contributed to internationally screened productions including Into the Blue and Kiss Me, Never, with music featured at leading documentary festivals such as Hot Docs and CPH:DOX. We Are Stardust marks his first feature-length documentary score.

Kristian Eidnes Andersen

Sound Designer

Kristian Eidnes Andersen is a Danish composer and sound designer with more than 40 years' experience in film music and sound. A graduate of the National Film School of Denmark, he has designed sound and music for more than 200 films. His long-standing collaboration with Lars von Trier includes Dancer in the Dark, Antichrist, Melancholia and Nymphomaniac. Other credits include Thomas Vinterberg's The Hunt, Nicolas Winding Refn's Only God Forgives, Pawel Pawlikowski's Ida and Amanda Kernell's Sámi Blood. He received the European Film Award for Best Sound Designer in 2020 and multiple Danish Robert Awards.

Jannicke Mikkelsen, FNF

Cinematographer

Jannicke Mikkelsen, FNF is a Norwegian award-winning cinematographer and film director specialising in next-generation technology and hazardous environments. A Cinematography Masters' graduate of the National Film and Television School (NFTS), her career spans work with Sir David Attenborough on the first underwater 360-degree documentaries for BBC, directing Queen's VR The Champions immersive concert, and serving as virtual cinematographer on the Netflix sci-fi thriller Stowaway starring Anna Kendrick. She is a Guinness World Record holder for the fastest circumnavigation of Earth via both poles, live-streaming to 55 million viewers. In 2017 she received the first ever Imago Award for Extraordinary Technical Achievement and has been named one of both Norway's and the UK's most influential women

in technology. A former competitive speed skater who trained for the Norwegian national team, Jannicke commanded the SpaceX Crew Dragon Fram2 mission in April 2025, the first crewed polar orbit mission in history, making her the first Norwegian astronaut.

Jason Leeds, SOC

Cinematographer

Jason Leeds is a Los Angeles-based Steadicam operator and camera operator and a member of the Society of Operating Cameramen (SOC). With a career spanning nearly three decades in Hollywood, his credits include James Cameron's Titanic, The Negotiator, National Treasure and The Black Dahlia. More recent work includes the Steadicam operation on Magazine Dreams, The Book of Boba Fett and the documentary feature The Donut King. He brings extensive experience across features, television and documentary to every production he works on.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

WONDERLINE

Production Company / Tromsø, Norway

Wonderline Productions AS is an independent production company based above the Arctic Circle in Tromsø, Norway, working internationally. The company produces and co-produces films, creative content and social impact campaigns, telling stories that stand for inspiration and positive social change. Previous work includes The Heart of Bruno Wizard (Feature Documentary, Netflix), Phoenix (2023, Short Documentary) and Techno Áhčči (2024, Music Video).

Co-production Company / Copenhagen, Denmark

Copenhagen Film Company Short & Doc is a Copenhagen-based production company focused on creative documentary filmmaking. With strong Nordic and international collaborations, CFC Short & Doc creates cinematic work for leading international festivals and global audiences. Recent films include Palm Oil in the Land of Orangutans (WP CPH:DOX), How to Kill a Cloud (WP Locarno), The Fight for Greenland (WP CPH:DOX) and There Will Be Water (WP Sheffield).

Production Company / London, United Kingdom

Bunker 47 is an independent London-based production and distribution company founded by Jamie Hever. The company's work has been selected for the Cannes Film Festival and produced and represented titles that have aired on the most prestigious channels and platforms around the world. We Are Stardust marks Bunker 47's first feature documentary production in the science space.

Production Company / Oslo, Norway

F(X) Produksjoner is an independent Norwegian production company established in 1995, producing films and series for established filmmakers and new voices alike. Producer Benedikte Bredesen has worked at the company since 2009. Recent productions include the cinema success Woolly (2024), House of Winge (2024), Priest of Burden (2014) and The Fight for Greenland (2020). The company's work has won Prix Europa twice for Best Documentary Film in Europe.

Full Credits

Executive Producer **Peter Searles**
Associate Producer **John Arvid Berger**
Line Producers **Jamie Hever, Maiken Lorentz**
Consulting Editor **Phil Jandaly**
Additional Editor **Heli Kota**
Cinematographers **Jannicke Mikkelsen, Jason Leeds**
Original Music **Philip Owusu**
Sound Design **Kristian Eidnes Andersen**
Sound Recording **Liew Ceng Teng, Nathanael Gustin**
VFX Supervisor **Colin Byrne (Little Shadow)**
Animator **Colin Byrne, Kristian Nordentoft**
Narrator **Elisabeth Rasmussen**
Stills Photography **Andrew Farrar, Viktoria Kovalenko, Jan Braly Kihle, Jon Larsen**

Technical Specifications

Format **DCP (2K, SMPTE, JPEG 2000, Unencrypted)**
Video Format **2K, 25 fps, X'Y'Z' Colour Space**
Aspect Ratio **1.78:1**
Sound Format **5.1 Surround**
Runtime **101 minutes**
Language **English and Norwegian (VO available in Norwegian, English or Sámi)**
Subtitles **English, Norwegian and Danish**

C O N T A C T S

Audience Development & Press

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Watch

Trailer — https://vimeo.com/1129894098
30 Second Teaser — https://vimeo.com/1173940805

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