

Official Selection
ANNECY 2018
Competition

TITO

AND THE BIRDS

(TITO E OS PÁSSAROS)

A FILM BY **GUSTAVO STEINBERG, GABRIEL BITAR**
& **ANDRÉ CATOTO**





TITO

AND THE BIRDS

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BRAZIL - 73 MIN - 2.35 - 5.1

<http://titoandthebirds.com>

INTERNATIONAL SALES & PRESS
INDIE SALES COMPANY

32 rue Washington 75008 Paris

T + 33 1 44 83 02 27

www.indiesales.eu

info@indiesales.eu & mgondre@indiesales.eu



— SYNOPSIS —

Tito is a shy 10-year-old boy who lives with his mother. Suddenly, an unusual epidemic starts to spread, making people sick whenever they get scared. Tito quickly discovers that the cure is somehow related to his missing father's research on bird song. He embarks on a journey to save the world from the epidemic with his friends. Tito's search for the antidote becomes a quest for his missing father and for his own identity.

— THE CHARACTERS —

THE CHILDREN



Tito

Tito is a shy, but very resourceful 10-year-old boy who lives with his fearful, overprotective mother Rosa. He believes he is able to communicate with his father, the scientist dr. Rufus, who left home when he was little, through courier-pigeons. His own interest in building gadgets and machines is another way of keeping Rufus in his life, to his mother's dismay. When an outbreak of fear starts spreading and threatens both Rosa and his friends, Tito goes on a journey with his mates Buiú and Sarah to find a cure for the epidemic.



Sarah

Charming, fun and brave, Sarah accompanies Tito in his adventure. She is a confident girl who circulates easily among the “nerd” and “popular” crowds in school. When things start to look hopeless, she is the one who drives Tito to persevere.



Buiú

Buiú is Tito's best friend since they were very little. Even shyer than Tito, he is an ingenious hacker. Buiú's disappearance after he falls ill is the first driver for Tito's journey to find a cure to the outbreak.

Téo

Téo is the richest, most popular boy in school, who loves bullying nerd kids like Tito. The spoiled child of media mogul and TV presenter Alaor Santos, he is used to having things done his way. It is through Sarah that Téo will start building a friendship with Tito and eventually help him find a cure to the outbreak.



THE ADULTS

Rosa

Rosa is Tito's anxious, jittery, overprotective mother. Living in constant panic of real and imagined dangers, she is an easy victim to the epidemic of fear.



Rufus

Tito's father, although absent for many years, or perhaps because of that, is a very important influence on the boy's life. Rufus left home when Tito was six, after a machine he had built to try to interpret birdsong exploded, almost killing his son.



Alaor

Alaor is the movie's villain. He is key to the spread of the fear outbreak because of his TV show, which narrates crimes and other "dangers" of living in the city. Not coincidentally, he made his fortune selling security apparatus and building gated community condos.





— DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT —

My home city, São Paulo, is known as the “city of walls”. Twenty million people live here, most of whom hiding behind fences, barbed and electric wires – it is as if fear has become an epidemic, a disease. Perhaps because of this, the idea that fear is contagious has always fascinated me. And imagined violence – which may be based on facts, but is greatly amplified by the media – contributes as much to this epidemic as real violence. When we first started conceiving the movie, in 2011, this was perhaps not as obvious as today, but lately, especially with

a certain hyperactivity deriving from an excess of connections, it has become clearer. And it seems to be happening everywhere - for different reasons, social inequality, economic crisis, terrorism etc., fear is taking over the world. And, in the name of fear, people build walls to protect themselves from other people, start wars, elect autocratic leaders. . . The dream of reaching a truly democratic society is going down the drain not because of real dangers, which can be fought, but because of imagined ones. I thought there were not many people making movies about this epidemic, especially for children. And I think that it might fall upon children to find a way out of this mess that we created for them. I hope they do!

PIGEONS

The pigeons and doves are very important in the movie: they are key to the outbreak's resolution and they are a permanent presence in Tito's journey, either from afar or from a close distance, protecting and accompanying the main characters. Having pigeons and doves as such prominent characters was not a casual choice. Pigeons have been living alongside human beings for as long as there are cities. They are some of the most adapted animals to urban life - with the possible exception of humans and insects. They transmit dangerous diseases, such as toxoplasmosis, and their excrements ruin monuments and facades. On the other hand,





they do occupy a privileged space in our culture's imagination – from the Holy Spirit and the white dove of peace to carrier-pigeons, some of whom have even received honor medals, such as Cher Ami, the French pigeon who saved dozens of soldiers when he crossed enemy lines with a message, even after having been shot in the leg, and GI Joe, a British carrier-pigeon who saved a whole platoon. Pigeons seem to evoke many symbols that have a direct relationship with the movie's central themes.

THE PRODUCTION

The movie was created over seven years, three of which in full production. I owe a lot to Daniel

Greco, our executive producer, who is much more experienced in animation than I am and helped me make the right decisions along the way, and also to Split studio, that brought my project to a much higher level of quality.

THE SCREENPLAY

Eduardo Benaim and I share a conceptual and aesthetic proximity – we had worked together before and I thought he would be the right person to write the screenplay with me.

The screenplay changed a lot over time as the story evolved. It was our first animation, so we had to find out what worked and what did not through trial and

error. To discover all the possibilities that working with animatic allows for was incredible. To be able to create a whole universe from scratch – something that only animation enables one to do – was a very liberating, almost metaphysical experience!

— SCREENWRITER'S STATEMENT —

Eduardo Benaim - Screenwriter

I was very enthusiastic about this project from the beginning, both because I know Gustavo and I share worldviews and because of the challenge he proposed: to create a story that had things to say to children, young adults and adults. The first treatment was developed trying to answer the following question: "How can one address our





culture of fear, of social segregation and of private security from the point of view of children?” As the treatment evolved into a screenplay, new and very instigating challenges emerged: how to turn an eminently adult genre – the dystopian, apocalyptic movie – into a hopeful vision for children? And, taking this into account, how to give depth to realistic characters that reflect a family structure that is very common in Brazil? Steinberg’s eyes as a director and especially as a producer warranted some changes in rhythm and in our approach to the theme that made the movie more dynamic and appealing to the target audience. And, even though the narrative universe, the premise, the plot and the characters remained unaltered, the visual artists

interpretation of the screenplay was essential to turn a good story into a great movie.

— THE DIRECTION —

I first got acquainted with Gabriel Bitar’s and André Catoto’s work through a short-movie festival that I used to produce. Their talent was obvious to me from the very beginning. When I decided to venture into the terrain of animation, they immediately came to mind, and they sign the movie with me as co-directors. Bitar also signs the movie’s art direction, together with Vini Wolf, who came later into the project.

— CO-DIRECTORS AND ART — DIRECTOR STATEMENTS

Gabriel Bitar – co-director and art director

Because we were dealing with issues such as fear and social chaos, during the research stage we felt a strong identification with European expressionist movement from the beginning of the 20th century.

We wanted to make the whole movie using oil-paint, but this turned out not to be a viable production model. “Tito and the Birds”’s graphical vein is the result of the interplay between a relentless search for the best possible way to convey gesture and express what we wanted to express, and the need to adapt our wishes to the resources we had. So, for example,





we photographed some oil-paint brushstrokes, which were then used by the digital painting staff. Later, during composition, additional paint textures and strokes were inserted in order to enhance light ambiance, shadows and other interactions, as well as animation of effects such as smoke, fire etc.

From the storyboard and layout phases, we had an idea of how much distortion each shot would have: as the fear outbreak spreads, the background becomes more and more distorted. The character's design also evolved over time. At first they were larger-headed, cuter, but this made framing more difficult. So they gained more realistic, humanoid proportions. Using the

cut-out technique, the simplicity of the shapes enabled the animators to invest more time in the drawings and pose shifts, making their gestures more expressive but at the same time able to accompany the harsher, more broken language of the brushstrokes' stopmotion.

André Catoto – Co-director

The inspiration for the characters came from many places, such as the way a neighbor carries herself, the way a professor writes etc. German expressionism also directly inspired the aesthetics of the movie. Artists such as George Grosz and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff are great influences, as is expressionist cinema,

which distorts backgrounds and characters, which made me look into the make-up used to generate these distortions, especially around the eyes, which transmit a slight discomfort, between tiredness and fear.

During the making of the movie, we tested many versions of the characters, but one thing we never changed were the very round eyes, because they are part of the story – it all begins with them.

Vini Wolf – Art director

A great part of my job was to translate the project's authors wish to use expressionist references into a movie geared towards children.

So I tried to bring together these strange elements, these distortions of perspective and shape, these lugubrious colors, and a vibrant palette, more defined shapes... The creation of characters also attempted to conciliate pop culture elements with the unusual elements proposed by the artists. So the characters resulted playful, but they also have distorted shapes, irregular anatomies and broken lines, as well as light volumes that integrate them with the background. I believe these choices helped find the right tone to communicate the movie's somber theme to its target audience.





THE MUSIC

I got acquainted with Kurlat and Feffer through Ale Abreu's *O Menino e o Mundo*. I thought their work in that movie was flawless. They are indeed great, not only from a creative point of view, but also in that they worked in partnership with us, not as service providers, but as co-creators.

We found the basic sonority of the movie rather quickly, as the musicians understood very clearly what we were trying to achieve with the movie. But the process of development of the whole score was much longer and more complex. Our aim was to develop the score very early on, so that the first animatic versions could incorporate the movie's specific sonority. This process was essential, as many times the music served as the basis from which we reworked scenes.

— MUSICIAN' — STATEMENT

Ruben Feffer – Original score composer

One of the first strong references for both Gustavo Kurlat and me was Hans Zimmer's *Interstellar* score, which we thought had incredible dynamics and presence, and was bold enough to incorporate unusual tones and sonorities, such as church organs. Elements from potent action movie scores, such as *Batman* and *Avengers*, are also present.

Kurlat and I decided to mark the moments of anguish, fear and uncertainty and to use elements such as the 13/8 count, smaller scales and dissonances to transmit these feelings. We aimed for something climactic, epic, dark and “twisted” that simultaneously worked for children but was not childish, and that matched the movie's visual language decisions.

The process had two stages. In the initial creation stage, which lasted for more than a year, we drafted and composed the movie's whole orchestration using virtual instruments in the computer. We started before any scene had been animated. The score was applied as the animatic was made, and then both the score





and the scenes were adjusted along the process. The second and final stage was the production phase, during which we substituted almost all electronic sounds for orchestral or electroacoustic instruments.

— DIRECTORS' BIOS —

[Gustavo Steinberg](#) was born in São Paulo in 1973. He has produced six feature films, directed two and written the screenplay for four movies since 1995. His previous films have won awards such as Best Documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival, Digital Award at the 60th Venice Film Festival, Official selection in the 37th New York Film Festival, Young Jury Award at the 53rd Locarno Film Festival, Best

Documentary in the Latin American Los Angeles Film Festival, among others.

Before co-directing “Tito and the Birds”, [Gabriel Bitar](#) has worked on title sequences and animations for several TV shows and feature films in Brazil such as Tropicália, Cidade Cinza and Tim Maia. His unique identity is defined by his wide range of skills using mixed media on all of his projects. His personal work involves painting, etching, photography, and he is also part of Várzea Ilustrada, a multimedia collective responsible for interactive multimedia projection and live animations. Four times winner at the short film festival Festival do Minuto in Brazil, he has also produced, animated and directed the short film “The City and Desire

Nº5”. Gabriel is a partner at Veranito, an animation studio based in São Paulo, where “Tito and The Birds” was composed.

[André Catoto Dias](#), born in 1979 in Rio de Janeiro, is a journalist and has worked with audiovisual productions ever since he graduated. Two of his short movies won awards at the Festival do Minuto: “Segredo” (2008) and “Receita de todo dia” (2009). He also directed the short film “Imo” (2011) and, in 2015, won the 19th Cultura Inglesa Festival and produced the short “Say I am Only Seventeen”. His latest short film is “@disexta”. He founded animation studio DnA.tv.br in 2011, where he remains until today.





— EXECUTIVE — PRODUCER'S BIO

Daniel Greco has dedicated his entire career for the entertainment industry. His filmography includes: Executive Producer and writer of «Vinyl Wars: the battle», the first latin america stopmotion production for Cartoon Network (2007). Production Supervisor and Story Editor for Luiz Bolognesi's feature film «Rio 2096: A Story of Love and Fury» awarded best film at Annecy International Film Festival (2013).

Producer for Gabriel Nóbrega's «War on Drugo» awarded Gold at Cannes Lions 2015.

Felipe Sabino is an experienced a 3d artist and Project Manager that has been working in the animation business since 2002. As an artist in the advertisement industry he has offered services for several companies such as Coca-Cola, Siemens, Unilever, Volkswagen, Amex and Mastercard. In 2009 he began his career as an independent producer and so far has worked as Line Producer, Head of production and Executive producer on both feature films and animated TV shows.



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