

TORONTO
INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
SEPTEMBER 6 TO 15

07

ROBERT BONER ET BENOIT DREYER
PRÉSENTENT

WINNER
ANNECY
INTERNATIONAL
ANIMATED
FILM FESTIVAL 2007
AUDIENCE AWARD



MAX



UN FILM DE
SAM ET FRED GUILLAUME

AVEC LES VOIX DE : LORANT DEUTSCH PATRICK BOUCHITEY MICHELINE DAX VIRGINIE EFIRA SANSEVERINO DENIS PODALYDES AMÉLIE LERMA

SCÉNARIO EMMANUEL SALINGER CHRISTINE DORY ANIMATION GUIONNE LEROY MUSIQUE RÉMATO BERTA ÉCRITURE BRUNO COULARD MONTAGE JACQUES COBETS RÉGIESSAGE FÉLIECIE HAYMOZ COSTUMEURS VIA MACKINNON & SAUNDERS DÉCOR LAURENT BALDE
PIERRE-ANDRÉ CHANEZ VOIX OFFRANTS LUC VAN DRIESSCHE FABRICE FAIVRE VOIX NICOLAS BECKER JEAN-JACQUES FERRAN RAPHAËL SOHIER STÉPHANE THIEBAUD UN FILM PRODUIT PAR ROBERT BONER ET BENOIT DREYER PAR SAM ET FRED GUILLAUME
UNE COPRODUCTION DE MAX-LEFILM (SUISSE), FUTURE FILMS LTD (UK), NEXUS FACTORY (SUISSE) ET CINÉ MANUFACTURE (FRANCE) EN COPRODUCTION AVEC LA TÉLÉVISION SUISSE ROMANDE UNE ÉMISSION SRG SSR, IDÉE SUISSE COPRODUIT PAR 2B ET MIG (SUISSE)
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WB

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TORONTO
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FESTIVAL
SEPTEMBER 6 TO 15 07

ROBERT BONER
AND
BENOÎT DREYER
PRESENT

MAX & CO.

A FILM BY
SAM AND FRED GUILLAUME

LENGTH: 1H15 / FORMAT: 1.85 / SOUND: SRD

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<http://www.wildbunch.biz>

SYNOPSIS

15-year-old Max sets off for Saint-Hilaire in search of his father, the famous troubadour Johnny Bigoude, who disappeared shortly after Max's birth. He is waylaid by Sam, a rascally fairground entertainer, and introduced to the delights of the amazing Fly Swatter Festival. When Max finally gets there, Saint-Hilaire turns out to be the private kingdom of Bzzz & Co., infamous manufacturers of flyswatters, run by the degenerate Rodolfo. Musical virtuoso Max makes a big impression, especially on smart, lovely, resourceful Felicie, who convinces Rodolfo to hire him...

Horrified by Rodolfo's calamitous mismanagement of Bzzz & Co., the shareholders bring in a ruthless new manager, and Martin - an eccentric scientific genius. Draconian measures are imposed: massive redundancies, a ten-fold work rate increase... and a publicity campaign overseen by the golden voiced sorceress Cathy.

The town's carefree way of life is replaced by a harsh new regime - a revolution accompanied by a mysterious plague of flies that signals a series of calamities... Terrible things are afoot, but only Max and Felicie seem to notice.

What secret, sinister work is Martin up to, locked away in his lab?

What are those mysterious lights that shine from the Bzzz & Co. building?

And where is Johnny Bigoude?

VOICES

Max Lorànt DEUTSCH
Roldolfo Patrick BOUCHITEY
Madame Doudou Micheline DAX
Katy Virginie EFIRA
Sam SANSEVERINO
Martin Denis PODALYDES
Felicie Amélie LERMA

CREW

DIRECTED BY Sam & Fred GUILLAUME
SCREENPLAY Emmanuel SALLINGER
Christine DORY
Guionne LEROY
ANIMATION DIRECTOR Renato BERTA
DP Bruno COULAIS
MUSIC Jacques COMETS
EDITOR MACKINNON & SAUNDERS
CHARACTER DESIGN
BACKGROUND Laurent BAUDE
Pierre-André CHANEZ
CGI Luc Van DRIESSCHE
Fabrice FAIVRE
SOUND Nicolas BECKER
Jean-Jacques FERRAN
Raphaël SOHIER
Stéphane THIEBAUD
PRODUCER Robert BONER
LINE PRODUCER Benoît DREYER

PRODUCTION MAX-LEFILM (SWITZERLAND)
FUTURE FILMS LTD (UK)
NEXUS FACTORY (BELGIUM)
CINEMANUFACTURE (FRANCE)

IN CO-PRODUCTION WITH
LA TELEVISION SUISSE ROMANDE
(une entreprise SRG, IDEE SUISSE)

CO-PRODUCTION 2B (BELGIUM)
MIG (BELGIUM)

WITH THE SUPPORT OF
L'OFFICE FEDERAL DE LA CULTURE
LE CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA CINEMATOGRAPIE
LA COMMUNAUTE FRANÇAISE DE BELGIQUE
PROMIMAGE
VAF (VLAAMS AUDIOVISUEEL FONDS)
LA LOTERIE ROMANDE
FONDS REGIO FILMS
FONDATION CULTURELE SUISSIMAGE
CANTON DE FRIBOURG

WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF CANAL+
CINECINEMA

INTERVIEWS

MAX & CO. is an adventure started by two young directors, Samuel and Frédéric Guillaume, and backed by Benoît Dreyer, one of their friends, who decided to take on the executive production of what began life as a twenty-minute short. This adventure took off when they crossed paths with producer Robert Boner. Seduced by their tenacity and enthusiasm, he invested in the project and brought it closer to the world of non-animated feature fiction - a world very familiar to him. He hired several names from the industry, giving them all decisive roles in the production: Renato Berta as cinematographer, Jacques Comets as editor, Christine Dory and Emmanuel Sallinger for the screenplay and Bruno Coulais for music. Each was very excited at the prospect of working on an animation film for the first time and fully participating in the development of the film.

MAX & CO. became an incredible adventure for the team, demanding the most from each of its participants and pushing them well beyond what they thought they were capable of, while permitting them to go even further in developing their technical and artistic acumen, two things that were intimately linked during the making of this project.

Here the makers of this incredible vision comment on the five-year journey they made in bringing MAX & CO. to the big screen.

THE BEGINNINGS: A DECISIVE MEETING

Frédéric Guillaume: With Samuel, we started by filming animation shorts. Personally, I was more interested in illustration, in everything that had to do with the graphics. Samuel had already put a few romantic films together as a teenager and wanted to go into filmmaking. We didn't start with the intention of creating a professional animation career out of this, we had just finished our first film to get into an art school, then we just wanted to keep going, together, supported by Benoît, who encouraged us and helped us structure our projects better.

Benoît Dreyer: After our studies, we each took separate paths: I went to HEC while Frédéric and Samuel were orienting themselves towards more artistic careers. When I attended the screening of their short film, they were in debt and didn't know how to move forward, how to really live of this line of work. Initially I saw this collaboration as a challenge, a practical exercise of what I had been learning at the time. We put together a business plan to finance a studio, equip it with material and to find funds to allow us to develop certain technologies, then we immediately started creating short films and adverts. Shortly after, we started putting together the idea of doing a medium length short of about twenty minutes, which would get us closer to a full length feature, and, in 2002, when we received our first screenplay, the seed that would grow into MAX & CO., we realised that we needed the help of a real producer. So we went to see Robert, who, when we first met, told us politely, but firmly, to go take a hike.

Robert Boner: They came to see me with a script for a short. There was the character Max, an elevator musician; there was a flyswatter factory, and the megalomaniac Rodolfo. All in all, the universe of the story was in place, but the script wasn't developed enough and I did criticise it pretty roundly. At the end of the meeting, I thought I would never see these young filmmakers again, but a few days later, I got an e-mail from them explaining that they had thought about it and decided to get back to work. I thought their work ethic was very constructive, I appreciated their motivation and availability, and, because I liked the feeling and ambiance of the script, I decided to get on board their project. This enterprise proved to be an instant source of intrigue because, due to a series of elements in the story, we had to address issues such as camera placement or character movement... real problems of cinema. It was like a return to the fundamental roots, the real values of this craft, values which we too often pass over, like taking time on the building of a particular layout, or how you cut the film, the movement of actors, or lighting... I was immediately swept away by both their enthusiasm and energy and by the makings of the entire experience, which, though complicated, seemed very promising.

WRITING THE SCRIPT: FROM CONCEPT TO REALISTIC NARRATIVE

Robert: We quickly arrived at the idea of making a full-length feature for production reasons. When, with Benoît, we started to really dig into the financial side of the project, we realised that in order to make it happen, we would have to go through the traditional circuits for financing the film, something that would be impossible with a twenty-minute project. So we turned to the idea of doing a full-length feature, and entered a new phase in the writing that lasted almost two years. It was a heavy project that took a long time to develop.

Samuel Guillaume: So we started, with Frédéric, attacking the writing of the new script, but we immediately ran into a wall while trying to put together the basic outline of the story.

Frédéric: We realised that making full-length features isn't just the next step on the ladder, which was the impression we had at the start. It's an entirely different approach to filmmaking.

Samuel: We had to send our story to external screenwriters so that they might bring a new energy and fresh approach to the story.

Robert: It was crucial that we flesh out the script, make it stronger. One of the notable things that was missing was that Max, who found himself immersed in this unique world, had no goal and we were having difficulty coming up with a general plot. Christine and Emmanuelle suggested that we build the story around a quest for Max's father, which brought an undeniable strength to the story, all while preserving the universe that Samuel and Frédéric had created, specifically the concept of the flyswatter factory, which I think is exceptional.

Frédéric: The idea behind the short was more of an allegory; it was more symbolic, more centred on the inner world of a character who has to play music in an elevator. The full-length film is an initiation journey where Max, on his quest for his father, grows from a child into an adult thanks to the many encounters he has along the way.

Samuel: We guided Christine and Emmanuel as they worked on the script. I remember one discussion in particular about the magic of the film and how we envisioned it. In the first drafts of the script, they suggested some excessive ideas such as the spontaneous transformation of Madame Doudou into a strawberry. They started by thinking that because it was animation, they could take certain eccentric liberties, try out certain unusual ideas. With Frédéric we saw that we really had to choose how best to orient the film and decided to anchor it with some kind of visual realism. We asked them to write from the position of someone writing a real fiction, as if it were going to be done with real actors. We didn't want a Disney-esque kind of magic, we wanted a kind of mechanical magic that would be original, as we see, for example, during the transformation of Sam's truck, or the wings of the mailman. With the artistic vision in place, and the general plot laid out, we let them work freely and they brought their imagination and talent to the project.

Robert: They also brought an absurd element to the script, for instance during the priest's speech at Madame Doudou's funeral, thereby making scenes more entertaining thanks to their command of dialogue.

Frédéric: The darkness of the story, the staging of Madame Doudou's death, were also part of the effort of rendering the reality of the story and one to which we paid a lot of attention. I was also struck by how cartoons, notably Disney cartoons, always take pains to avoid death. For me, if death comes up in a script then it shouldn't be hypocritically shied away from. On the contrary, we wanted the disappearance of Madame Doudou to be significant, to be something that would bring the story forward, acting as a transition and a turning point.

MORE THAN A JOURNEY: A POLITICAL, SOCIAL & HUMANITARIAN ADVENTURE

Frédéric: At the start, we had the beginnings of a story that was anchored in economics, targeting the relationships between a boss and his workers. We hoped to present a real discussion, without being moralising, on the world of today. A while ago, with Frédéric, we found ourselves at the heart of a village that had been broken by the closing of its factory. Everyone had just been fired. It was an experience that marked us and inspired us. It also came at a time when we were creating our own company, going to see investors, we were coming out of the artistic world to enter into a more industrial one, something that also made an impact on us.

Benoît: I was taken with the universe they created in their first film, by the wild industrial landscape surrounding the little cities.

Jacques Comets: There is a very poignant sociological and ecological dimension to the film. I was surprised that Samuel and Frédéric were able to succeed in presenting serious subject matter in this way using animation, which was, for me, a medium principally used for fantasy.

Robert: I was pleased to be able to go further than the big American studios, to push the idea of the social, ecological fable, and not to shy away from showing its bitter and cynical side. I was troubled by the naïve worker revolt, and, there are very beautiful characters in this story, like Félicie's father, who moves you with his awkwardness.

CROSSING OF CULTURES

Jacques: If we always had the feeling of being held together by the uniqueness of Samuel and Frédéric's universe, we were all transported by this project because it immediately became a group effort.

Samuel: It's the kind of collective work that Jacques is talking about that made for the specificity

of the film. We were surrounded by professionals who came directly from feature fiction, who don't have certain animation tics and who brought their knowledge and skills to the project. They completely invested themselves, far more than what is customary, and moved beyond their territory.

Renato Berta: I always hesitate when young directors ask me to work on their films because they can lack experience. Here, because it was also my first time working on animation film, it reduced the gap between us. Nevertheless, I still wasn't convinced by Robert's proposition until I met Samuel and Frédéric. They told me their intentions and I was convinced. Actually, I was convinced by their questions. They had never really been confronted by a full-length feature and I had visual experience, a mastery of the relationships between sequences, between different shots, much more so than they had. So we talked about the script and I embarked on this adventure almost without realising, by suggesting backgrounds that would have to be built completely.

Jacques: The film was always in perpetual movement; there was no ownership of ideas. What immediately interested me in the project was the fact that it was still a work in progress when I joined the team. Therefore, contrary to what I normally have to do, I had to find solutions at the beginning, and, working under certain limitations, build the film working only from drawings. It was incredible and very motivating to be able to participate in the writing of the narrative in this way.

Renato: The other thing that attracted me to the project was the fact that we had to invent everything. We had to create an entire universe, structure the story and participate fully in its evolution. We started pragmatically, element by element. It was impressive to start from absolutely nothing and then create everything, basing everything on the ideas imagined by Samuel and Frédéric. It was a passionate experience on this level. I was able to take a more general, completely visual approach, which goes far beyond my work as a camera operator, which logically consists of organising images based on

what is given to you. Here I was able to participate in the actual creation of the work.

Jacques: The time we were able to have thinking about the interplay between the editing and the writing was particularly enriching. It was around these collective exchanges that we took on important cinematographic problems such as how to frame the character acting. For the actor to have character, they need to be framed in a certain way. For example, with Renato, we would make an outline and together we would choose which were the best takes. Renato reworked the framing, changed the shot order, then, when I would integrate the new scene into the work, the character's acting was much more accurate.

Frédéric: There was also cultural crossover between people from different countries. Meeting with the British team proved decisive for the project, they had a very different, precise approach.

NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR CREATIVE LIBERTY

Benoît: Even if we had the same teams, the same doll supplier, the same person to collaborate with on making sets and props and the same staff of animators, we would still have had only half of the budget of a CHICKEN RUN or WALLACE & GROMIT: THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT. So, at a certain point, we had to create productivity, notably in our ability to produce and output frames. With Robert, we were adamant that we would give as much time as possible to the animators and that above all, we wouldn't put them in the situation of having to wait for a motion control operator to stage a movement, or for lighting. In order for the teams to be more productive, we had to optimise their ability to work, hence the necessity of pre-preparing the sets using computer programs. We developed various tools, but principally, we put together a program that would be able to calculate and reproduce changes made in the movement of the camera, light sources, framing, image transformations and to be able to reorder sequences on the timeline and manage the entire network of sets at the same time. We also built cranes: tools

that we invented with a studio by fleshing out a research program developed by a team of engineers, 7 in all, who worked on the software.

Jacques: What impressed me was that the heart of this very technological world, technology never seemed to impose itself or overshadow the rest.

Benoît: With these tools, we were able to prepare the film. When Renato, for example, came onto a set, all he had to do was call up his notes on one of the servers, notes that were all included in the editing. He was therefore able to set up the lighting with a much lighter crew and work much faster.

Robert: It's one of the things that kept me on board, the desire they had to develop new technologies and modernise the world of animation. I really appreciated this industrial approach, one that ended up reinforcing the cinematographic approach.

Benoît: A lot of animation projects get stuck on the rigid problems of fabrication. It's always very complicated to build the sets and props, to light them and camera movement is always frame by frame which is painfully tiring, you have to calculate everything and often the team is completely overwhelmed, exhausted by the technological limitations. Today I'm happy to say that we successfully broke through this technical barrier.

SCHEDULING & LIGHTING THE STORY: METHODICAL PREPARATION

Benoît: Generally speaking, in animation, you edit the film before the actual filming so shooting is actually part of the post-production.

Renato: We started working together with a program called Sketchup, a 3D modelling program that allows you to build large parts of sequences. Normally used by architects, this program allowed us to virtually position framing, movements of principal characters, and cameras. In this way we were able to organise an approach from the beginning that resulted in a large volume of technically reliable film.

Samuel: This data was then imported into Maya, a more elaborate 3D program, and treated by a team of three computer graphics designers who refined camera movement and character animation according to sounds and music that we had pre-recorded.

Renato: What was incredible was that the film already existed on Maya, it was edited, well timed with the dialogue, all the camera movements were predefined, all that was left to do was create the sets and characters for what already existed.

Frédéric: Every shot was then imported into FinalCut Pro so that we could use them as Animatic rushes, an outline, a kind of frame arrangement that we used as a reference during the shoot, like a little film of the film itself.

Renato: In the end, the most difficult thing was establishing a stability, a continuity between frames taken at different times throughout the day. It was a nightmare stabilising and managing slight variations in the lighting. Because the shots took so long, sometimes taking days or even weeks to complete a single shot on one of the sets, everything depended on the technical difficulty of the animation. Also the wooden sets would sometimes change shape according to changes in room temperature, and these transformations would upset the lighting. The technical work was much more time consuming than actually getting "real" shots.

Jacques: For me, taking into account the work rhythm, and the number of sets, the number of animators to manage, my work consisted of following the narrative as we progressed. In order to avoid being bogged down by a succession of problems, we built the film's story well before the shoot, the editing thereby consisting of taking the shots that we had put together on Maya and replacing them with those that we filmed.

RENDERING THE STORY & CHARACTERS MORE HUMAN

Samuel: We didn't want to use humans at all, that's why we chose to make the characters animals,

but the story was not about animals, it was about humans. That the characters were animals also helped us. When animating humans, the slightest error in movement is blatantly obvious. With animals, we were able to give ourselves a little margin. It's possible to deviate a little bit and concentrate on the characteristics of each animal: the mean toad, the cunning fox, the kind woodchuck, and to use what they actually represent as a vehicle for creating our characters. What we then did with the animators was a lot more interesting because they had to transcribe human gestures and emotions into the body of an animal, which, at the same time, creates a certain distance. The characters also became more human as the script evolved.

Robert: I thought it was interesting how in this way, basing the story around animals instead of humans, an animation film, by being more schematic, could become closer a traditional feature.

THE BIRTH OF THE FIGURINES

Robert: Samuel and Frédéric started out by making dolls with which we made a teaser. Then, when we had the possibility of entering into a co-production with England, they immediately asked us to make contact with Mackinnon & Saunders. It was a turning point, their help went way beyond the dolls. They really sealed the realism of the script and brought with them exceptional animators creating a quality of ensemble that, at the time, we hadn't yet thought possible.

Samuel: At the time, we were stuck, and suddenly, when we saw the first sculpture from Mackinnon & Saunders, we had a renewed drive for the film. We saw a new vision for the film, it took on a new form.

Robert: We were inspired to redo a whole series of drawings, everything became possible.

Samuel: We had been very limited, and when we saw what they were capable of, we let ourselves go and became much more demanding. We stopped thinking about the technical limitations and really expressed what we wanted to the fullest degree.

Benoît: Some 80 people worked on the creation of the figurines. One of them has been a sculptor for 25 years, she knows the material perfectly and continues to master her craft with real joy, a thirst for challenge on certain characters which astonished us. They loved that we asked them to do the impossible, it was incredible.

THE EMOTIONAL POWER OF THE ANIMATION

Samuel: We had 27 animators who divided the sequences, according to their skills and abilities. They weren't each assigned a character; we did castings with the animation director for each sequence according to the scenes and style of scene. Some were clearly better when we were doing an action scene, while others felt more comfortable doing the more intimate scenes, bearing in mind that a good animator can animate both feminine and masculine characters equally well. What was pretty astonishing was that we worked for the first time with real animators that have a lot of experience and they don't let the technical problems stop them. It went well beyond simple manipulation. We had the impression that they really stepped into the shoes of the characters.

Frédéric: Like actors, animators need to be reassured and guided, and they asked us a lot of questions to get a feeling of how things should be, they needed real indications of what to do. They spent almost three months on every sequence, in front of their characters - that's a real investment. With Samuel, we had to be convinced, while at the same time, we needed to tell them what to do and show them our enthusiasm. Being in front of an animator without knowing what I really wanted was one of the worst moments for me on this adventure. It is possible to pretend, there is a strong human rapport, which is painful, and at the same time, fascinating.

Renato: Personally, I went from set to set according to the different problems we had to resolve and my assistants followed everything on each set, and made sure that everything was going according to plan while interacting with the animators. I was

impressed by their work, the way they study every position, every expression. They film each other to have an idea of how to coordinate a certain movement, find the right rhythm by observation, by scanning the gestures and expressions of the people around them.

THE INFLUENCE OF DUBBING

Samuel: What was impressive was that the visual development of the characters was done before we cast the voices and, when we recorded them, we were surprised to see that, oddly enough, the majority of the actors looked like their characters. Patrick Bouchitey, for example, possessed some of Rodolfo's mannerisms.

Robert: To add some realism to the script, we wanted to unite the actors and put them in real situations, as if we were filming a feature fiction, so that they wouldn't be alone in front of a microphone, but really acting in real scenes. This interaction brought a real energy to the story and reinforced the naturalistic side.

Samuel: Since they had all recorded the voices together before the shoot, working only from the dialogue, it was particularly constructive for the whole team and definitely for the animators to be able to use their work. We filmed the voice recordings and the animators were therefore able to refine the attitudes and expressions of the characters accordingly.

AN ENRICHING ADVENTURE FOR EVERYONE

Robert: Cinema, in its essence, imposed itself on this production, like some kind of concentrated force that broke through the various technical, financial and organisational problems we had along the way. It was a real group effort, made towards the realisation of an "auteur" film, and that's how I like to work. This was a magical adventure, a real lesson in filmmaking at every stage of conception.

Jacques: I feel the same way as Robert, that there was an extraordinary pleasure that emanated from working as a group. I see it as a very modern approach to cinema, an extremely realistic way of working that deals simultaneously with certain industrial limitations and the group work ethic while at the same time, being very personal and unique, something that has nothing to do with industry issues, therefore putting "auteur" cinema on one side and more commercial cinema on the other.

Frédéric: What I am left with today is a feeling of knowing better how to delegate work and how to find pleasure in the work, something that is essential in this field.

Samuel: Above all, I learned that if you don't deal with a problem when it should be dealt with, then it won't be resolved at the next stage. I place a lot more importance today, for our new project, on every stage of the conception.

Benoît: Beyond the cinematographic adventure, I still think that the most important thing is what we developed around the film, the work tools that are still at our disposition and a formidable professional network. We were helped along the way by big names in the animation industry, but also in feature fiction, and I think we brought a fair number of things from the fiction world to animation, things that have been missing in animation for a long time. This combination was particularly enriching for the film.