



PRODUCTION NOTES

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LOG LINE

Young panda bear Ping's best friend, Jielong the dragon, is kidnapped and brought to Africa. Ping follows her without question. After a dangerous ocean-crossing he reaches the faraway continent, totally unknown to pandas. There, our unlikely hero with a big heart, relying on his wits and some new found friends, needs to rescue Jielong from an evil lion and his henchman.

SYNOPSIS

PANDA BEAR IN AFRICA

Young, spirited Panda Bear Ping, lives in the bamboo forests of South China, along with his best friend, Jielong the dragon. One day, Jielong is kidnapped by a crazy baboon and his dimwitted crocodile assistant and taken to Africa. Having made a pact to protect each other, Ping stows aboard a junk, owned by gnarled orangutan sailor Xing Xing and sails to Africa to rescue his friend.

After a perilous journey, Ping lands on the East Coast of Africa where he meets Jojo, a quick talking talapoin monkey who offers to help unite him with his friend. However, Jojo is a con-man, working for a Fagin like ostrich and he leads Ping into a trap. Resourceful Ping manages to escape his captors, while Jojo recants his ways and begs for a second chance. Being a good-natured Panda, Ping invites Jojo to join him on the journey. Together the unlikely pair traverse deserts, face an army of meerkats and befriend an angry hyena, as they cross a continent full of beauty, danger and wonder.

Meanwhile, Jielong is presented as a birthday present to King Ade, a spoiled 13 year old lion cub who lives in the Southern Cape of Africa, by his uncle Malume. But Malume has a secret plan to use the dragon to destroy his rival hyena's forest and drive them out.

Having formed a close bond on their journey, Ping and Jojo help to return Niala the hyena to her home on the Southern cape. They are planning to rescue Jielong when they are captured by Malume's henchmen.

With Ade replaced as leader of the lion pride, evil Malume orders Jielong, to destroy the hyena's forest, Niala's family home. Ping and Jojo must figure out how to save Jielong and Niala, avert disaster and defeat Malume. Only then can they return home to China, with their loyal friend Jojo in tow.

Yootha Wong-Loi-Sing (Pang)

Yootha Wong-Loi-Sing is an incredible Dutch actress and singer, whose star is rapidly shining brighter and brighter across the world. She played the lead role in the independent film *Really Love* (2020) alongside Kofi Siriboe for Charles King's MACRO and currently globally on Netflix. The film was selected for South by Southwest Film Festival in the Narrative Feature Competition and Yootha and Kofi received the Special Jury Recognition for Acting.

She was a series regular on *Love Is_* (2018) for Oprah Winfrey's OWN network created by Mara Brock Akil and starred in the *Black Lightning* (2021) pilot for the CW Network. Yootha burst onto the scene with her captivating portrayal of Mini-Mini in the feature film *Hoe Duur was de Suiker "Price of Sugar"* (2013), which earned her a prestigious Dutch Academy Award nomination (Golden Calf) for Best Actress. Set in 18th century colonial Surinam, her character was a free-minded slave determined to break the shackles of her oppression. She continued her career with roles in *De Paradise Suite* (2015) which won a Dutch Academy Award for Best Film and was that year's Dutch submission for the Academy Awards, and the first Dutch Netflix Original Film *Forever Rich* (2021) by Shady El-Hamus and Videoland's *Dormis* (2022).

She made a name for herself on the small screen as well, taking on starring roles in a variety of shows, such as the first season of the Nickelodeon series *De Ludwigs* (2016), the US remake *Hunter Street* (2017-2018), Videoland's *Het A Woord* (2020) and Amazon's *Modern Love* (2022). Yootha took on the lead role of Yola in the eagerly awaited TV-series *Santos*. This gripping series delves deep into the passionate, underground love story set in the grimy underworld of Rotterdam.

GEORGINA VERBAAN (Jielong)

Georgina Verbaan is a writer and actress. She has played in series such as *Maud & Babs* (2023, NPO), the first original Dutch Viaplay production *Kerstmens* (2023, Viaplay), and she played the lead in the long-running series *KLEM* (2017-2020, NPO) as well as the comedy series *'t Schaep met de Vijf Pooten* (2006-2015, NPO). Georgina has starred in many popular Dutch features, including *The Surprise* (Best Dutch Actress, 2015) directed by Oscar-winner director Mike van Diem, *The Marathon* (Best Supporting Actress, 2012), *Hartenstrijd* (2016), *The Club of Ugly* (2019), *Buiten is het Feest* (2020), and *Klem – the movie* (2023). – full CV on IMDb

THOM HOFFMAN (Xing Xing)

Thom Hoffman (1957) acted in 80 feature films and tv-series, *The Fourth Man* and *Blackbook* by Paul Verhoeven (1983, 2006), worked with Lars von Trier in *Dogville* (2003), and starred in *My Fair Lady* (Henry Higgins) and *Chicago* (Billy Flynn). He was narrator in BBC's *Earth: One Amazing Day* (2017)
Hoffman is an accomplished documentary filmmaker and author about history. He currently plays Ludwig van Beethoven, performing with the Storioni Trio, in a show he wrote: *Beethoven, who are you?*

Richard Claus

Filmography/CV

2024

Richard Claus studied at the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin. After graduating in 1978 he worked as a cameraman, directed and shot several TV documentaries and short films and wrote and directed two theatrical films:

- BANANENPAUL, 1982, a children film, official selection International Film Festival Berlin and winner of the UNICEF award
- DIE NACHT UND IHR PREIS, 1984, a theatrical released documentary

From then on Richard mainly worked as a producer and served from 1986 to 1993 as the managing director of the German production and distribution company Delta Film in Berlin. His productions and co-productions in this period include:

- ROUGE BAISER, 1985, a French-German co-production directed by Vera Belmont, which won Best Actress at the Berlin Film Festival
- PARADIES, 1986, directed by Doris Dörrie, winner of two German Film Awards in Gold
- ALS DIE LIEBE LAUFEN LERNT, 1988, a low-budget box-office hit directed by Michael Strauven
- SUPERSTAU, 1991, a German cult-comedy, directed by Manfred Stelzer

In 1994 co-founded and became CEO of the Cometstone companies with offices in Amsterdam and Los Angeles until 1999. During this period, he lived predominantly in Los Angeles and produced the following feature films:

- MUTE WITNESS, 1994, with Sony Classics, directed by Anthony Waller, selected for the Directors' Fortnight Cannes and for the Sundance Film Festival
- AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS, 1997, with the Walt Disney Studios, directed by Anthony Waller
- THE LITTLE VAMPIRE, 1999, with New Line Cinema, directed by Uli Edel, won the German Film Award in Gold as best family film

In 2000 Richard moved back to Europe, produced with his German Comet Film, splitting the time between Amsterdam and Berlin. In 2009 he set-up the Dutch production company Cool Beans BV and became a resident of The Netherlands. These are his productions and co-productions from then on:

- THE THIEF LORD, 2004, which Richard also co-wrote and directed, based on Cornelia Funke's international bestseller, with Warner Bros. and 20th CenturyFox
- LAURA'S STAR, 2004, directed by Thilo Graf Rothkirch and Ute von Münchow-Pohl, German Film Award in Gold and winner of four film festivals
- THE UGLY DUCKLING & ME, 2006, directed by Karsten Kiilerich, with A.Film Copenhagen and Warner Bros.

- DODO, 2007, directed by Thilo Graf Rothkirch and Ute von Münchow-Pohl, winner of the Silver World Medal at the New York Festival
- THE SILENT ARMY, 2008, directed by Jean van de Velde, Official selection Cannes 2009 “Un Certain Regard”, winner of the Golden Film award in The Netherlands
- BLACK BUTTERFLIES, 2010, which won the Best Actress award at Tribeca and the Audience Award in Taormina, three Golden Calves at the Dutch Film Awards 2011 including Best Picture and six SAFTA (South African Film and TV Academy) Awards including Best Picture
- THE HEINEKEN KIDNAP, 2011, directed by Maarten Treurniet and with Rutger Hauer in the title role, received the Dutch Platinum Film Award
- LAURA’S STAR AND THE DREAM MONSTERS, 2011, directed by Thilo Graf Rothkirch and Ute von Münchow-Pohl, German Film Award in Gold and winner of four film festivals
- THE PRICE OF SUGAR, 2013, directed by Jean van de Velde, received the Dutch Golden Film Award
- THE SURPRISE, 2013, directed by Mike van Diem (as individual co-producer)
- CHEZ NOUS, 2015 (as individual associate producer), directed by Tim Oliehoek
- THE LITTLE VAMPIRE 3D, 2017, the first 3D computer animated film in the Netherlands, which Richard also co-wrote and co-directed, with CMG Cinema Management Group
- THE STATE VS NELSON MANDELA, 2017, directed by Jean van de Velde, the first official Netherlands/South-African co-production, which won multiple awards at festivals and two Golden Calves at the Dutch Film Awards
- AINBO: SPIRIT OF THE AMAZON, 2020, a Dutch-Peruvian co-production, an animated film which Richard co-wrote and co-directed, with CMG Cinema Management Group
- PANDA BEAR IN AFRICA, 2024, an animated film with sales agent CMG and Le Pacte of France joined the German and Danish co-producers of The Little Vampire 3D.

Five of the above films between 2008 and 2017 were produced in South Africa, for which Richard created the production and visual effects company Broadbean Media (Pty) Ltd. in Cape Town. He was granted a permanent resident status in South Africa based on “exceptional skills”.

In 2015 Chantal Nissen joined Richard as a producing partner at Cool Beans. After the completion of The Little Vampire 3D they set-up the animation company Katuni BV, which will eventually grow into an animation studio. Since Chantal’s arrival at Cool Beans the company has greatly expanded its development activities and is aiming for a more continuous production output.

Richard lives in The Netherlands, is married and has a daughter and a son. Besides his enthusiasm for film, he is a passionate sailor and, according to people with knowledge, also a pretty good cook.

KARSTEN KIILERICH. WRITER/DIRECTOR & CO-OWNER OF A. FILM

FILMOGRAPHY

2023/2024 DIRECTOR: Panda Bear in Africa (feature film) – Cool Beans/Comet Film/A.Film/Le Pacte 2024

2018/2019 DIRECTOR: Ruby and Raggie (feature film) – A.Film Estonia/ A.Film

2017 DIRECTOR: Hodja and the flying carpet (feature film) – M&M Productions/ A.Film 2016

DIRECTOR: Hodja and the flying carpet (feature film) – M&M Productions/ A.Film 2016

AUTHOR: The little vampire (tv series) - Comet Film/ A.Film

2015 DIRECTOR: The Little Vampire(Feature film) – Comet Film/ First look BV /A.Film 2015

AUTHOR: Hodja and the flying carpet (Feature film) – M&M Productions / A.Film

2015 AUTHOR: Ruby and Raggie (feature film) – A.Film Estonia/ A.Film

2014 AUTHOR & DIRECTOR: Albert (feature film) - M&M Productions / A. Film

2013 CREATIVE PRODUCER: Hocus Pocus Alfie Atkins (feature film) - A.FILM / Maipo

2013 DIRECTOR: Bibi and Tina (tv series) - Kiddinx Studios GmbH

2013 DIRECTOR: The story of a string (short film) - M&M Productions

2012 DIRECTOR: Alfie Atkins (tv-series) - Maipo / A. Film

2012 CREATIVE PRODUCER: Miffy (feature film) - Telescreen / A. Film

2011 DIRECTOR: A little film about Friendship (short film) - A. Film / A.Film Eesti

2010 DIRECTOR: Things you Think (Series of short films) - A. Film / A.Film Eesti/ Studio Rakete

2009 DIRECTOR: Bibi & Tina (tv series) - Kiddinx Studios GmbH

2008 DIRECTOR: Frog and Friends (tv series) - Telescreen

2008 CREATIVE PRODUCER: Journey to Saturn (feature film) - A. Film

2007 DIRECTOR: Things You Think about love (short film) - A. Film / A.Film Eesti / Magma

2007 DIRECTOR: Things You Think about being rich or poor (short film) - A. Film / A.Film Eesti /

Magma 2006 DIRECTOR: The Ugly Duckling and ME (feature film) - A. Film / Ulysses / Futurikon

/ Magma 2005 SUPERVISING DIRECTOR: Bibi Bloksberg (tv series) - Kiddinx Studios GmbH

2005 SUPERVISING DIRECTOR: Bibi and Tina (tv series) - Kiddinx Studios GmbH

2005 DIRECTOR: The Ugly Duckling and ME (tv series) - A. Film / Futurikon / Magma
2004 CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: Terkel in Trouble (feature film) - A.Film / Nordisk Film
2003 SUPERVISING DIRECTOR: Bibi & Tina (4 x tv specials) - Kiddinx Studios GmbH
2002 DIRECTOR: Little Wolf (tv special) - A. Film / Lupus Film
2001 DIRECTOR: Bibi Bloksberg (4 x tv specials) - Kiddinx Studios GmbH
1999 DIRECTOR: When life departs (short film) - A. Film (Nominated for Academy Award) 1998
DIRECTOR: Troll Tales (tv series) - A. Film/Egmont Imagination
1998 DIRECTOR: Benjamin Blümchen (tv series) - Hör und Lies
1997 DIRECTOR: Mumble Bumble (tv series) - Egmont Imagination / Cinar
1996 DIRECTOR: Benjamin Blümchen (video special) - Hör und Lies
1995 AUTHOR: Help I'm a Fish (feature film) - A. Film / Munich Animation / TerraGlyph 1994
DIRECTOR: Petzi – (TV series) WDR / DR

CV CHANTAL NISSEN

Chantal Nissen graduated in 2007 from the University of Amsterdam as a Master of Arts in Television Studies with a minor in American Studies and in Journalism. Award winning productions Chantal has worked on include Bram Fisher (dir. Jean van de Velde), Layla M. (Mijke de Jong), Sien van Selligen (dir. Pieter Verhoeff) and Taarten van Abel (dir. Agnes de Ruijter). Since its inception in 2015, Chantal is an active member of the Dutch Academy For Film.

Memberships / Workshops / Courses

- Workshop Script Ontwikkeling - ScriptAcademy (2020)
- Workshop “Meerstemmig Storytelling” - FilmForward (2020)
- Observer at ‘Created by’ workshop for showrunners - FilmForward (2020)
- Presented at the NFF seminar: AINBO en UNDONE, de productielijn (2019)
- Post Production Workshop - EP2C (2017)
- Member Dutch Academy For Film (2015 - current)
- Master of Arts in Television Studies (2007)

2015 - current

PRODUCER

AT COOL BEANS

- 2022 - , LILLY AND THE FLYING DUTCHMAN, 85 minutes, 3D animation, in development
Produced by Richard Claus & Chantal Nissen
- 2022 -, DUMMIE THE MUMMY, series, 3D animation, in development
Produced by Paul Voorthuysen, Richard Claus & Chantal Nissen
- 2021 -, CROSSING WORLDS, 90 minutes, live action, in development
Produced by Richard Claus, Chantal Nissen & Rienkje Attoh
- 2021 -, TUTUBA, 90 min, hybrid, in development
Produced by Richard Claus, Chantal Nissen & Rienkje Attoh
- 2024, PANDA BEAR IN AFRICA, 84 min, 3D animation, in post production
Produced by Richard Claus & Chantal Nissen
- 2021, AINBO: SPIRIT OF THE AMAZON, 85 min, 3D animation
Associate Producer Chantal Nissen
- 2018, DE KLEINE VAMPIER/THE LITTLE VAMPIRE 3D, 84 Min, 3D animation
Line Producer Chantal Nissen

AT AERNOUW MIK

- 2018, DOUBLE BIND, three-channel video installation, Aernout Mik
Produced by Chantal Nissen
- 2017, A SWARM OF TWO, two-channel video installation, Aernout Mik for The Raft. Art is (not) lonely, Mu.ZEE Ostend
Produced by Chantal Nissen & Mu.Zee Ostend
- 2016, DIE FREMDEN, single-channel video installation, Johan Simons & Aernout Mik
Produced by Chantal Nissen & NTGent
Courtesy Ruhrtriennale
- 2015, DAYTIME MOVEMENTS, four-channel video installation, Aernout Mik/Boris Charmatz
Produced by Chantal Nissen & Musee de la danse, Rennes
Courtesy Carliergebauer, Berlin and Boris Charmatz

2017-2018

IN-HOUSE LINE PRODUCER AT CIRCE FILMS

TARDE PARA MORIR JOVEN, Dominga Sotomayor

A CERTAIN KIND OF SILENCE, Michal Hogenauer

A TALE OF THREE SISTERS, Emin Alper

SOME LIFE FORMS, in development

AVRUPA, in development

THE WHOLE TIMERS, in development

2015 - 2018

LINE PRODUCER FEATURE FILM

- DE TAND DES TIJDS, The Film Kitchen, Erik Verkerk & Joost van den Bosch
- BRAM FISCHER/THE STATE VS NELSON MANDELA, Cool Beans, Jean van de Velde
★ Winner of 7 awards: Best Screenplay (2x), Audience Award (2x), Best Film, Best Actor and Best Actress ★
- LAYLA M., Topkapi Films, Mijke de Jong ★ Winner of 6 awards: Best Actress (2x) + Special Jury Award, Best Supporting Actor, Audience Award, Fritz-Gerlich-Preis ★

2017

LINE PRODUCER OTHER PROJECTS

- POESJES, Stormy Minutes, Nova van Dijk, 13 x 12 min TV series
- KUNSTHART, Stormy Minutes, Mijke de Jong, 32 min TV film
- AEON, Circe Films, Gabriel Lester, 3 channel video art piece & single channel 30 min film

2009 - 2018

PRODUCTION MANAGER FEATURE FILM i.a.

- ROKJESDAG, Nijenhuis & Co., Johan Nijenhuis
Platinum Film (400.000 plus tickets sold)
- OUT OF LOVE, Topkapi Films, Paloma Aquilera Valdebenito
- KIDNEP, Topkapi Films, Diederik Ebbinge
- ONDER HET HART, Waterland Film, Nicole van Kilsdonk
- ONDER INVLOED, Column Film, Nova van Dijk, 50 min
- ROKEN ALS EEN TURK, IJswater Films, Remy van Heugten, 11 min

2009 - 2015

PRODUCTION MANAGER TV SERIES i.a.

- SIEN VAN SELLINGEN, Interakt, Pieter Verhoeff
★ Winner: Beeld en Geluid Award 2011 ★

2009 - 2011

TAARTEN VAN ABEL, Stormy Minutes, Agnes de Ruijter

Produced and executed 3 x 12 episodes of the very successful, with a market share of 17,8%, and still continuing children's documentary series

★ Winner: Ere Nipkow schijf 2012 and Gouden Stuiver 2011 ★

2007

I EXIST

Produced, written and directed by Chantal Nissen - graduation documentary: 35 minutes

CV ROB SPRACKLING

Rob Sprackling is a feature film and TV screenwriter and award winning writer/director.

He conceived and co-wrote the original screenplay for the Disney animated movie 'Gnomeo & Juliet' starring James McAvoy and Emily Blunt, with music by Elton John. It took \$200 million at the box office and was nominated for an 'Annie' (animation's most prestigious award) for Best Writer.

He conceived and co-wrote the screenplay for the animated feature 'The Queen's Corgi' starring Jack Whitehall. It took \$50 million in cinemas, breaking records in France and the Netherlands, where it was No 1 at the box office.

He conceived, wrote and is co-directing the \$20m animated movie 'Flamingo Flamenco' for Studio100 in 2024 and has three other movies currently in production 'Heidi - Rescue of the Lynx', also for Studio 100, 'Pinchcliffe Full Throttle' for Qvisten and 'Panda Bear in Africa' for Richard Claus/CMG.

He co-wrote the award winning animated movie 'Ella Bella Bingo' (Elleville Elfrid) for Frank Mosvold and has written Frank's next movie 'Legend of Magnus the Good' which is at the animatic stage.

He has written for most US film studios: including Fox, Dreamworks, Disney and Paramount and most major UK film companies including Working Title, BBC Films and Aardman, for whom he co-wrote several original screenplays and did punch ups on their Oscar nominated 'Shaun the Sheep' and 'Early Man' movies.

He conceived and co-wrote the original screenplay 'Mike Bassett: England Manager' starring Ricky Tomlinson. The top grossing British low budget film at the UK box office in the year of its release, it was voted the best football film (fiction) of all time. Reviews include: "This sports satire is arguably the best football film ever made, and unarguably the funniest." The Times. "Hilarious" The Sun.

The movie spawned the ITV1 sitcom 'Mike Bassett: Manager' which he co-wrote and exec produced. It averaged 3 million viewers a week. Reviews include: "Mike Bassett: Manager is an extremely funny spin off series." The Times. "Tomlinson's in his element with a script that rattles along with dry one liners." The Sunday Telegraph. "This is turning into a gem...but the real stars are the writers". Radio Times.

He conceived and wrote the original period TV drama series 'Alsatia' which was recently sold to BAFTA award winning 'Companny Pictures' (Wolf Hall, Shameless).

He directed three multi-award winning short films and wrote the children's book 'Born Again Ben' which he sold to Paramount Pictures.

He is a BAFTA member and is represented by Gemma Hirst (GHA) in the UK and Charlie Ferraro (UTA) in the US.

PANDA BEAR IN AFRICA

PRODUCERS' NOTES ON THE FILM'S CAST

The producers and directors of PANDA BEAR IN AFRICA were aiming to cast the voices for the film with actors whose ethnic background corresponds to the region where the film's animal characters are at home. Together with casting directors Richard Lothian (Cape Town), Lorella Jowi (Nairobi) and Jeremy Zimmerman (London), they found the voices for the film's diverse cast of characters.

Actors with an Asian background to voice the Asian animal characters include Yootha Wong Loi Sing of Chinese/Surinamese ethnicity (known for Netflix' *Really Love* and *Love Is_* from Oprah Winfrey Network), Adrian Pang (two time Best Actor award winner at the Asian Television Awards and known for Tony Scott's *Spy Game*) with a Malaysian background and Dutch stars Georgina Verbaan (Golden Calf winner for *The Surprise*) and Thom Hofmann (*Black Book*) both with an Indonesian background.

African animals are voiced by an all-black cast including Rapper Maurits Delchot of Surinamese background, South Africans Candice Modiselle (from Netflix' *Love Sex and 30 Candles*), Malisa Madalose and Silas Lekgoati, and Kenyans James Webbo and Joyce Musoke (from Showmax' *Twende*).

These voices from different regions of the world add a distinct tone to the film, and are a reflection of diversity, which is also an underlying theme of the film.

DIRECTORS' STATEMENT
PANDABEAR IN AFRICA
RICHARD CLAUS AND KARSTEN KIILERICH

Preliminary remark by producer Chantal Nissen

A lot of documents have to be prepared in connection with the financing of a movie. Of course, a script, a budget, cast and crew lists, but often a director's statement is also required. I tried to squeeze something like this out of Richard and Karsten, but neither of them was particularly motivated to invest a lot of time in it. So, I decided to do an interview with both of them, and the transcript is the director's statement of this movie.

Interview by Chantal Nissen with Richard Claus and Karsten Kiilerich (in 2020)

What is the origin of the idea and the story?

RC: I have a 6-year-old daughter (note: she is 10 in the meantime), and besides reading all kinds of stories to her, we are also inventing stories together. Her favourite characters in our own stories are baby-animals (in human terms probably her own age), which are most of the time from Africa. Seriously, the idea to tell a story with African animals was born this way. The next thought was to add a hero who would be a "fish out of water", and that might have to do with myself. Then Chantal Nissen came up with the panda bear, who we subsequently designed as a role model for toleration and tolerance. In this context I might want to mention that my wife is from Kenya and both of my kids are "donker", as the Dutch would say, and toleration and tolerance are terms which play a big role in our life.

KK: Richard brought the idea to me. He wanted to create a fish out of water story and send a Panda to Africa. It's a wonderful and colourful combination with loads of options for drama and fun. Richard has been living in Africa for a while, so it might have to do with that. He loves that continent and he presented the idea to Edward Noeltner, the CEO of Cinema Management Group. They are a sales agent who is willing to engage in the development of ideas that they like. The animated movie "Loving Vincent" is one of them. It turned out to be a good choice, and let me add, we all worked together on the creation of "The little Vampire 3D".

How did you work on the script together?

KK: It's been a real fun journey. We know each other since "The Ugly Duckling & Me" and we also did "The Little Vampire 3D" together, so we connect, and that's an advantage. You really have to be able to swallow a camel or two... or let me rephrase: You really have to be open-minded and communicative. If you try to protect your own idea because you are vain, then forget about it.

RC: Our practical collaboration (after having just exchanged thoughts) started with the second draft of the screenplay. We were working together in the same room in Copenhagen for a week. First, we made decisions what to keep and what to change, and then we went back to a new step outline. By the way: it is better to go “back to the drawing board” all the time for a new and hopefully better version. If you just make changes here and there in the same script, it will always remain the same script. That may be a way to polish dialogues or so, but not if you seriously want to change things. We were working act after act. We discussed, then I was writing the new step outline, then Karsten wrote a quick and first version of each scene, we discussed again, and then I took the scene and wrote a revised version, we discussed again and agreed on what the scene should be like.

KK: Sometimes you really have to accept input from co-writers even though you like your own ideas better. In the case of “Panda Bear in Africa” it really went smoothly. Neither Richard or I need to prove our own genius. We work for the film and we understand what the other guy is saying, kind of.

RC: Obviously our skills to write English dialogues are somewhat limited, and we knew all along that we would need someone to help us with that.

What did Robert Sprackling contribute?

KK: Robert worked with us on two versions of the script. He is a very experienced and competent scriptwriter. He came up with a series of ideas that expanded the story-universe and took the outline to a higher level. We had quite a lot of conversations on email and Skype and Richard went to London several times in order to discuss the material with him.

RC: Robert is a very energetic person with very strong opinions. He forces you to have a good reason for everything in the story. That was sometimes hard, because you started to get used to certain things, of which you thought they would work, and you were happy about them, and then he comes and questions everything again. But like our hero Ping: Sometimes you have to leave your comfort zone if you want to achieve something, and that is what Rob forced us to do.

KK: Robert also put the final dialogue lines to the paper. We decided to do the script in English and Robert has a pretty obvious advantage being English himself. Of course, we had intense discussions concerning the content, but I can honestly say that we always landed on our feet and we always found a common direction.

RC: Robert worked on lots of scripts. Besides his credited work he did tons of polishes and re-writes for all kind of well know animation studios. It was clear that with his experience he would not limit himself to some dialogue polishing, nor did we want to limit him to that.

Is it only about entertainment?

KK: May I quote the Danish poet Piet Hein? “Taking fun as simply fun - and earnestness in earnest - shows how thoroughly thou - none of the two discernest.” I don’t think you should limit yourself to only creating an entertaining movie. If you do not have an element of earnest the movie will probably not be entertaining either. You simply need to address the doubt, the bad consciousness and the fear of the characters. Otherwise, you will end up with a one-dimensional movie, and that’s neither interesting nor entertaining.

RC: ...and by the way, what’s wrong with entertainment? Children and their parents definitely don’t go to the movies to get bored. Yes, we want to make an entertaining film, a fun and funny adventure, which will also be accessible to families with smaller children. But there is also a deeper message in our film about diversity and friendship, crossing the boundaries to “the others” and learning to understand them. Although the film has no human characters, we will ensure that the film’s young audiences can easily identify with our main heroes, which at first glance seem exotic. The panda bear Ping and the dragon Jielong will take the audience with them on a spectacular but also enlightening journey.

Why does the story need to be told?

KK: Let me put it like this: I do not think that the human race would stop breathing if we will not tell this story. On the other hand, it’s a new and never seen combination of a panda, dragons and African wildlife. It’s an interesting friendship story between creatures from different backgrounds and different worlds, they learn to communicate, to accept and respect each other, become friends.

RC: The subject of strangers/foreigners/refugees is one of the big issues of our time. Demagogues around the world build their cases based on prejudices about “the others”. Understanding and acceptance of “the others” is the underlying theme of “Panda Bear in Africa”, and in a way this theme was also beneath the surface in the story of “The Little Vampire 3D” as well.

KK: I guess moviemaking is all about giving the audience a fresh and unseen adventure and some food for thoughts, and I certainly think that this is what the audience will get when they go to the Cinema and watch “Panda Bear in Africa”, follow our panda Ping on his journey...

RC: ...who is a lovable, polite and resourceful character, who protects his old friends and finds new friends under the most unlikely circumstances.

Who is the target audience?

KK: Kids of all ages, that’s our hope, but from the distributors and marketing people we learn that there are at least two categories of kids, the 4 to 8 and the 8 to 12 age groups. We have decided to go for the 4 to 8 year-olds, but we don’t forget the older kids and also their parents who go with them to the movies.

RC: I find it really important that the film will not be not too scary for kids from four years on. My daughter is now six years old, and with her I have my own in-house focus group. I have been reading the screenplay as a bedtime story to her, and I am getting a lot of interesting feedback. Not that this is a very important point of the film's story, but she really loves the moment when Mpho can't remember what kind of animal Karabo is, and says (in Dutch): "Ba... ba... banaan." I personally never thought this was such a great joke, but she is quoting it all the time.

KK: When talking about the film's story, style and - God forbid - message, you always have to see this in relation to our young target audience. Keep it simple, but don't think the kids are stupid.

Can you say something about the characters and the dialogues?

RC: We have a great variety of animal characters, which obviously represent humans: From a small and fast spoken talapoin monkey to a gnarled orangutan sailor, from an angry hyena to a spoiled lion prince. And because these are animals, and it is animation, and it is bigger than life, all these characters can speak in their own and very special characteristic way.

KK: Panda Ping, our protagonist, has to overcome unlimited challenges and he has to learn to trust himself. Being a panda in far-away Africa is certainly challenging to the limit. Jielong is a young female dragon and she is kidnapped, with another level of problems, especially since the power-seeking lion Shakeel believes that dragons spit fire, but Chinese dragons can't do that. And then there will be a huge gallery of supporting characters in our movie, from rhinos to meerkats, from jackals to elephants and giraffes.

RC: The characters and the story are inspired by fables of animals and fairy tales, which exist in all cultures around the world. We know about old Dutch animal stories from the Middle Ages, for example "Van den vos Reynaerde", and there are also more contemporary works, like the stories from Anton Koolhaas. In this tradition, Dutch human characters, human values and conflicts are embodied by a variety of anthropomorphic animal characters.

KK: The dialogues are written for kids and adults. They are definitely not childish, but also not overly academic. They have been thoroughly worked on with a focus on story and character development but first of all they have that snappy and humorous twist that makes them fun, interesting and entertaining for all ages.

What is the genre?

RC: Is "fish out of water" a genre? I don't know. It is a family-film, I think that is a genre. In some way it is also an action film - but obviously not in the way as "Mad Max" or "Die Hard", and also a road movie - in a world without roads, though. It is an adventurous journey through a fantasy world populated with talking animals - and no people - without countries, borders, governments or armies.

KK: It's an adventure comedy. And please note, we love this genre. We make these movies for the audience, yes, but just as much for us to make them. It's simply fun work, and if, on top of this, the audience enjoys watching the movie, even better.

What is the theme?

KK: Friendship... understanding and acceptance of foreigners. And add to that: the willingness to ignore your own needs and go to the end of the world to protect your friends.

RC: Also coming of age. And not only for Ping, our main character, who has to “man up” to achieve what he needs to achieve, but for Jielong too, who dreams to be a grown-up dragon from the beginning and in the end learns what a grown up dragon can do, for example flying.

Why so far from home, why China and Africa?

KK: Thank you. That's a nice question. We are doing animation. We are not limited by anything. Only by our imagination.

RC: We hope and know that our film will have a bigger audience outside the borders of the Netherlands or the borders of the co-producing countries than inside these borders. It is common knowledge that animated films in general travel better across the borders of their country of origin than live action feature films. That is one of the reasons why I am enjoying making animated films. But this is still a very European film. Although the story is not set on the European continent, the values on which the film is based: tolerance, respect, openness, acceptance and understanding of “the others” are very European values.

KK: It's fun to go places. The settings in China and Africa simply are wonderful to watch, to be in - and we travel the Indian Ocean. We wanted to bring two worlds together, the Chinese pandas, dragons and the orang-utan and all the African animals. Different animal characters meet and resolve misunderstandings between their different viewpoints.

Does the film play today, in the present time?

KK: Yes and no. It is a no-time universe, and then again it is set in a kind of pre-industrial time, a time without mobile phones etc.. Our talking animals have a limited amount of gadgets, they can sail a boat, but we do not see a car or anything like that. You can say that time is not important.

RC: We were actually discussing if the film should be set in the past, being a period film, in connection with the first exposé. We came to the conclusion that the question might be irrelevant. When is the famous fable of Guy de Maupassant about the raven and the fox set? In the 19th century? I don't think so.

What has changed in terms of content in the story in the various versions of the script?

RC: A lot.

KK: First it was more or less a road movie. Then we added a kidnapping. Then we decided to change our dragon, in order to make it a real Chinese dragon, and this again affected the story. In the meantime we defined the tone of the film and worked out the relations between the characters. On top of that a lot of things were revised. Scenes changed places and the ending was reworked. Don't forget: Three different writers from three different but all European cultural backgrounds worked together.

What will be characteristic for the film's style?

RC: You want to bring your story across, not be making statements about style. Our audience has certain "Sehgewohnheiten", as we say in German. Viewing habits? We need to pick up our audience from where they are. There is something I don't like in any kind of film, that is when filmmakers want to show-off, visibly demonstrating how clever or original they are. Best example: Crazy camera-positions, which take you totally out of the story. Of course, we will invest a great deal of time into discussions about the look of our film, the design of the characters, the sets, the colours and also - the camera positions. I guess Karsten and I and also Edwin Rhemrev, Niels Grønlykke, Patrick Schoenmaker and Paco Vink have a strong sense of style, but I would always quote "form follows function" - and I don't even know who said that.

How realistically will the characters and nature be depicted?

RC: As soon as we are getting too photorealistic with an animated movie that kind of defeats the purpose of making an animated film in the first place.

KK: The film is taking place in the nature. In a real world. So to say, but we never intended the visuals to be a one to one copy. We work with a certain degree of stylization, which goes for both characters and backgrounds. We tweak the animals in order to make them fit their characters. Ping the Panda is a cute and appealing guy. Shakeel, the lion, a scrupulous villain. Mpho, the alligator, a nitwit assistant. Just to mention a few.

What is the difference between "Panda Bear in Africa" and "The Little Vampire 3D" on which you worked together too?

RC: For me personally the biggest difference is that I know a bit more about animation now. But if I would have known then what I know now - and that is still not a lot compared to Karsten - I would have probably not dared to take on that project.

KK: We all learned a lot from working so closely together on "The Little Vampire 3D". We learned a lot from the production process, but we also learned a lot about each other and we found a very direct way of communicating: No bullshit, so to say. If you create an animated film with somebody and stay friends, you have a very good platform for venturing out into a new animation adventure together.

How does “Panda Bear in Africa” differ from other, for example American animated films?

KK: We are not copying anyone, and just based on our experiences and backgrounds, which are different from other filmmakers in other countries, what we are doing is different too. The style and the aesthetic aspects of the films we are making won't jump to the foreground, but that does not mean we are not thinking about this. What makes us different from a lot of American films is that we are socially and politically aware, don't repeat racial, social and gender clichés over and over again, and we always try to avoid fake emotions. And there is something we hate very much, and that is Kitsch. It is a German word, but I don't think I have to translate it.

RC: In connection with the “Sehgewohnheiten”, which I mentioned earlier, the films from the US studios are setting certain always evolving technical standards, which we can't ignore. An example: Although it is expensive and time consuming to work with characters with digital hair and fur, and it would be better for our budget to avoid that, there is no way that we would make this film and the characters don't have hair and fur. We will obviously go much more stylized with our characters, than say the new “Lion King”, but we would not get away with a look like “Madagascar” from 2005. We are 15 years further down the line and if we make a film with a panda bear hero, he needs to be fluffy and cuddly.

Who are your main creative contributors in making the film, and what is their role?

KK: Coming up with a good story and an appealing gallery of characters is mandatory. I really appreciate that many people contribute. The animation process is very democratic. Of course the directors are, after all, the conductors of the orchestra, but all the professionals in the team contribute with ideas and input, often without even being asked... The designers of the characters and the universe surrounding them are very important artists. In this case they are also intelligent and able to judge the overall creation, from script to final picture. And then: All the animators, the editors, the composer, the sound designers... I could go on.

What role will music and sound play?

KK: From the very beginning in the development phase music and sound had strong positions in the film. We actually wrote several songs for the characters to sing, but we decided only to use one of them. We stuck with the basic intention of letting the distinct sound and music of China and Africa play a very active role in the movie.

RC: As so often quoted - and this time I know who said it: “Sound is half of the experience”. I personally find it unfair, because if you look all the work everybody is doing in order to create an animated film's images... We are lucky to have Vidjay Beerepoot as our composer, who did a great job on “The Little Vampire 3D” and is doing the same on “Ainbo” right now.

How can two directors work together on a film, is there a division of labour?

RC: With an animated film there are so many artistic and technical contributions from so many different people. I was asked recently, when co-directing with José Zelada, how I can materialize my “vision” of the film, and I think it would be a sign of hubris if a director wanted to make an animated film just according to her or his own vision. Even more than on a live action film, the director should assemble and compile all the contributions from all the talented artists and technician working on the film.

KK: Animation is in many ways different from live action filmmaking. The production is stretched over a longer period of time and often it is also taking place in different countries. So it is not only a question if one can work with another director, often it is a must. Animation movie making is somehow comparable to working on a conveyor belt. Because of the nature of the production, you can split the work up and also split the responsibility. You can work with design and storyboard in Holland and at the same time do the dialogue recording in England and the modelling and rigging of characters in Denmark. At the end of the day it is, however, mandatory that two people who are working together, directing a movie, are willing to listen and to communicate.

Karsten: Why do you want to work with Richard again?

KK: Richard is an experienced and competent filmmaker, who now has three animation films under his belt. In addition, he has been working with live action filmmaking for many many years, which brings a whole new set of qualifications to our common work. He is a specialist in live action camerawork and he brings a whole new pair of cinematographic eyes to the production. But that is only a part of the answer. Richard is a very entertaining guy, something that I personally appreciate, and I believe that this quality is important if you want to create entertaining movies. Richard is strong in making decisions, an ability that saves you a lot of time and stress, and he is very clear and direct in his communication. We simply understand each other and we do not waste our time pondering about unnecessary details.

Richard: Why do you want to work with Karsten again?

RC: The best about him is that he has a lot of experience, a good sense of humour, and not that kind of ego - you now, *that* kind of ego. I dare to say we are friends, and what is nicer than spending time with a friend?

What are the challenges in making this film?

KK: There are a lot of technical challenges when you work in animation. Everything has to be planned very carefully. If the characters are not designed and rigged properly the animation won't work. If the sets are too big and heavy, you cannot work in them and so forth.

RC: All of our characters are four-legged, each of them with different running, walking, climbing styles. We need great character sheets with emotions, expressions, poses from Patrick Schoenmaker and for the animation we need to produce in pre-production an

archive of walking and running cycles for the characters, and a whole variety of poses for each of them, plus blend-shapes for their facial expressions. Also, our characters have a lot of hair and fur, we have vast landscapes, lots of sets, water, you name it, and many, many characters.

KK: Every second in an animation movie is expensive. You cannot just put up several cameras. You cannot just shoot a scene several times. As a consequence, you cannot go back and re-edit an animation movie if it is not working. You have to have a very precise vision when you begin the work. You have to produce the movie before you produce the movie. Let me try to explain. Based on the script you do the storyboard and then you edit the animatic. This takes place before you start animation, and there is no way back. The animatic has to be strong in the early phase. If it's not, you won't find out till it's too late.

What are the limitations of the relatively small budget?

RC: As always, the ABC of filmmaking: Ambition, budget, consistency. I invented this ABC myself, and when I will be really old, I will write a book about filmmaking with this title. Here is the summary of the book. You need to synchronise your ambitions with the budget, and then be consistent throughout the film.

KK: You have to be efficient and fast. You cannot change and redo stuff many times. So, you better do it right in the beginning. There is a limit to how many characters you can build. There is a limit to how many sets you can build. It all takes time and costs money. We have to plan things carefully and create solutions, which make the audience believe that the movie is more expensive than it actually is. No matter how small a budget we have, we will still be compared to the very expensive productions from the American majors.

ON-SCREEN CREDITS PANDA BEAR IN AFRICA AS THEY APPEAR IN THE FILM

PRESENTATION CREDITS IN THE BEGINNING OF THE FILM

CINEMA MANAGEMENT GROUP

PRESENTS

A

COOL BEANS

PRODUCTION

CO-PRODUCED BY

A. FILM PRODUCTION COMET FILM LE PACTE

ANIMATION STUDIOS

KATUNI

A. FILM PRODUCTION

SUPPORTED BY

NETHERLANDS FILM FUND

SUPPORTED BY

**ABRAHAM TUSCHINSKI FUND THE DANISH FILM INSTITUTE
ESTONIA PRODUCTION INCENTIVE GERMAN FEDERAL FILM FUND**

PANDA BEAR IN AFRICA

MAIN CREDITS AT THE END OF THE FILM

DIRECTED BY

RICHARD CLAUS KARSTEN KIILERICH

SCREENPLAY BY

ROBERT SPRACKLING

STORY BY

KARSTEN KIILERICH RICHARD CLAUS

PRODUCED BY

RICHARD CLAUS CHANTAL NISSEN

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

EDWARD NOELTNER

CO-PRODUCERS

ANDERS MASTRUP

ANNE-LAURE LABADIE JEAN LABADIE

CO-EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

WILCO WOLFERS

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

NIELS GRØNLYKKE

PRODUCTION DESIGNERS

STEN MESTERTON EDWIN RHEMREV

EDITOR

JOB TER BURG ACE/NCE

MUSIC BY

VIDJAY BEEREPOOT

SUPERVISING SOUND EDITOR

NARDI VAN DIJK

ANIMATION DIRECTOR

STINE BUHL

ANIMATION AND 3D SUPERVISOR

MICHIEL VAN IPEREN

CHARACTERS DESIGNED BY

PATRICK SCHOENMAKER TOM VAN RHEENEN

STORYBOARD SUPERVISOR

PACO VINK

PIPELINE AND VFX SUPERVISOR

JAKOB STEFFENSEN

LINE PRODUCER

LISE ANN MANGINO

CASTING BY

RICHARD LOTHIAN

YOOHA WONG-LOI-SING

MAURITS DELCHOT

NAMISA MDLALOSE

GEORGINA VERBAAN

SILAS LEKGOATHI

CANDICE MODISELLE

STHANDILE NKOSI

THULANI NZONZO

THOM HOFFMAN

ADRIAN PANG

END CREDITS

Character Animators

(In alphabetical order)

Christiaan van den Bosch

Jorn Boven

Laura Brodersen

Denise Bunschoten

Margo Busch

Stine Frandsen

Maria Glowacka

Quentin Haberham

Sebastian Hannibal

Ted Heemskerk

Meike Hoeks

Michiel van Iperen

Dani Jonker

Noa Juel

Anric Koning

Antoine Lefevre

László Lenhardt

Bas Leopold

Tessa van Merle

Lydia Mikkers

Dmitry Molodkovets

Emiel Penders

Gabriel Garcia Poignet

Eric Reniers

Jayson Rynita

Ludovic Savonniere

Joost van Schaik

Voice Cast

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Pang | Yootha Wong-Loi-Sing |
| Jojo | Maurits Delchot |
| Jielong | Georgina Verbaan |
| Ade | Namisa Mdlalose |
| Malume | Silas Lekgoathi |
| Niala | Candice Modiselle |
| Kabora | Sthandile Nkosi |
| Mpho | Thulani Nzonzo |
| Xing Xing | Thom Hoffman |
| Abu | Charles J Ouda |
| Camel | Angel Orugbo |
| Kang | Adrian Pang |
| Biyu | Georgina Verbaan |
| Babu | Thom Hoffman |
| Darius | James Webbo |
| Young Ade | Namisa Mdlalose |
| Young Niala | Candice Modiselle |
| Wong | Kok-Hwa Lie |
| Lwazi | Silas Lekgoathi |
| Mrs. Dungbeetle | Candice Modiselle |
| Mrs. Dungbeetle | Silas Lekgoathi |
| Imani | Sthandile Nkosi |
| Mrs. Python | Joyce W. Musoke |
| Mr. Python | Charles J Ouda |
| Panda Greengrocer 1 | Thom Hoffman |
| Panda Greengrocer 2 | Kok-Hwa Lie |
| Ade's Mum | Candice Modiselle |
| Ade's Dad | Thulani Nzonzo |
| Lwazi | Silas Lekgoathi |
| Jackal 1 | Lungile Lallie |
| Jackal 2 | Angel Orugbo |
| Jackal 3 | Charles J Ouda |
| Vulture | Joyce W. Musoke |
| Mrs. Hippo | Candice Modiselle |
| Mr. Hippo | Thulani Nzonzo |
| Male Lion | Thulani Nzonzo |
| Meerkat Chief | Charles J Ouda |

Mask Voices and Walla

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Job ter Burg | Carter Cambio |
| Lissa Chigumadzi | Daimo da Costa |
| Amir Gordon | Monique Jackson |
| Mac-Kaylen Johnson | Siphenathi Khatshwa |
| Werner Kolf | Lungile Lallie |
| Luhle Macanda | Morapeleng Makgotla |

Refilwe Modiselle **Susan Nyabonyi Nyaribo**
Mpumi Sizani **Abdul Tchoufon**

Additional Casting Kenya **Lorella Jowi**
Additional Casting Great Britain **Jeremy Zimmermann**
Casting Associate **Shelley Lothian**
Walla Group Casting **Clare Anderson**

Art Director **Sten Mesterton**

Storyboard Artists **Stefan Fjeldmark**
Jelle Brunt

Layout Supervisor **Benjamin Bækkelund Brokop**
Layout Artists **Christiaan van den Bosch**
Eric Reniers

Character Modeling Artist **Yuliya Shvets**
Character Modeling and Shading Artists **Yana Savchuck**
Gijs van Kooten

Character Groom Supervisor **Simon Dilling Hansen**
Character Groom Artist **Eline Oppewal**

Set & Props Modeling and Shading Artists **Stein van de Ven**
Henk Kok
Skydome Artist **Brent van den Hove**

Rigging Supervisor **Yuliya Shvets**
Riggers **Henk Kok**
László Lenhardt
Søren Kærn

Pipeline Technical Director **Bram Vermaas**
Junior Pipeline Technical Director **Maxine Meijboom**

VFX Supervisor **Daniel Silwerfeldt**

Lighting Artists **Nick Rutten**
Bas Jansen
Eline Oppewal
Shading and Render Consultant **Troels Christoffersen**

Compositing Supervisor **Fir Suidema**

Colorist **Rachel Stone**

Production Babies

Doris

Jonas

Lex

Sofia

Sophie

William

In loving memory of Irén Sályik

A Dutch/Danish/German/French Co-Production by Cool Beans A. Film Production Comet Film Le Pacte

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