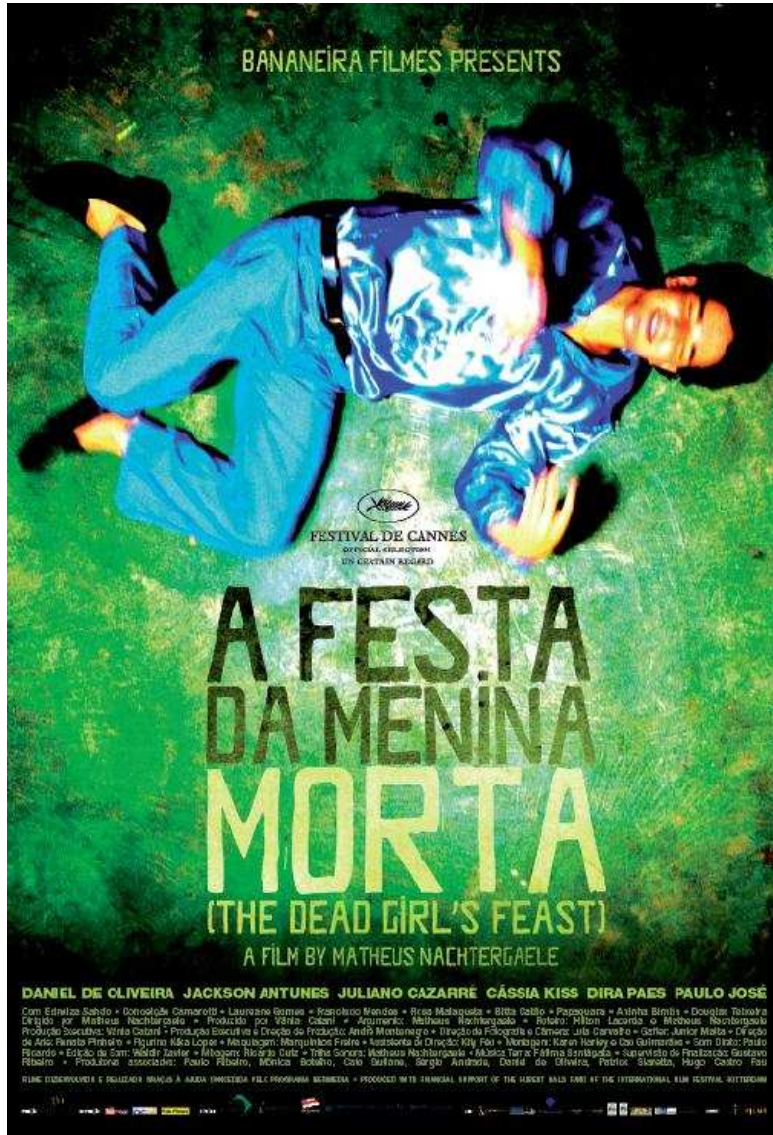


BANANEIRA FILMES PRESENTS

A film by **MATHEUS NACHTERGAELE**



World Premiere in Un Certain Regard

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“THE DEAD GIRL’S FEAST”

I have always been touched by the endless ability of living beings to adapt and transform in order to dodge the finite. In spite of the continuous threat, we all seem to move on. We are viruses, sea-weed, and bacteria. We are animals and plants. We survive by ourselves or in groups, in the water, on earth, and in the air.

- Matheus Nachtergaele

THE STORY

The good people of a small upper Amazon riverside community live in the presence of a Saint. Pilgrims are soon to arrive from far and wide to worship and be blessed by him at the shrine of the Dead Girl on the occasion of her 20th annual feast day. They will also eat and drink and enjoy live entertainment by the Space Triplets.

The Dead Girl’s brother has serious misgivings about how much his sister’s memory is being exploited; and just below the surface of the Saint’s reputation lies a deeply conflicted soul.

SYNOPSIS

For every one of the last 20 years, The Dead Girl’s Feast has been celebrated in a small riverside community in the upper part of the Negro River. The occasion commemorates the ingenuous miracle that was performed by THE SAINT, a local boy who, soon after suffering his mother’s suicide, recovered the shredded and bloodstained remains of a missing girl’s dress from the fangs of a stray mongrel. The little girl’s remains were never found, but those of her dress were enshrined to create in The Saint’s humble dwelling a place of worship and pilgrimage.

The practices of the cult and the annual feast evolved over the years into a huge enterprise, despite persistent objections from the dead girl’s brother, TADEU. These days, the inhabitants of nearby Amazon villages visit the small town on the holy day to worship, pray and beg, as they anxiously await the girl’s revelations, which are to be channeled by The Saint.

The Saint’s FATHER is eager to exploit every opportunity to profit from the event and from his son’s growing reputation in the region, even as he carries out a casually incestuous relationship with his son. The devout AUNTIE lives as a surrogate mother in service to The Saint and keeps her concerns about his

private life a secret. The doting and sexy DAS GRAÇAS and the young novice LUCIA do their best to maintain order and decency in the household shrine, which is given to occasional flare ups of madness.

On the day of the feast, Tadeu steps back into his role literally propping up the spellbound Saint through the procession to the riverside. A hush goes over the largest gathering ever as The Saint steps up to the microphone to utter the Dead Girl's annual message.

NOTES BY THE FILMMAKER

Inspiration

Fear of death in the human species pushes us not only toward tactics of pure survival, but also to the playing out of some very elaborate behavior: grief, depression, melancholy, romantic desire, sexual compulsion, artistic expression and suicide. I believe the rituals of faith are central coping mechanisms for human kind. Each and every culture invents in its own vernacular a sacred world, a drama, to bring some sense to existence. Examining the insistent tendency of mankind to invest in matters of faith, I was inspired to write the story of this film.

In "The Dead Girl's Feast" I tried to render the intimate portrait of a community deeply involved in a mystical cult. Every character in the village lives in his or her own particular state of mourning, each facing some sort of horror as they advance, day by day, toward the shared fate of all mankind. They are disjointed people, stupefied by life, throwing themselves to the ground, before the rags of their dreams, which are symbolized by the shredded dress of a dead child.

Writing Process

The first step I took in developing the script was to invent a religion, based on some ceremonies I had witnessed among the faithful of a sect. I tried to delineate an intimate and even promiscuous portrait of several members of that sect, exposing the ways each of them related to his or her faith. I forthrightly put myself in the position of every one of the characters. Little by little, fiction started to morph into a personal statement. Suddenly I had become the orphan Saint of a suicidal mother. I was also Auntie with her blind faith as well as the lascivious father who exploits his son, both economically and sexually.

I wanted to leave the bounds of my own personality and create something of a self-portrait in making the film. In that pursuit, it was necessary to engage another screenwriter. As soon as Hilton Lacerda joined me, all the things I had just spewed out over the page began to take shape as a screenplay. Hilton created Tadeu, the Saint's challenger and alter ego in the film, thereby setting

up the clash at the heart of the story. I became The Saint, Hilton was Tadeu and we kept fighting every step of the way and as we wrote.

The final touches were applied to the script when I went to Barcelos, a small riverside town on the banks of the Rio Negro in the upper Amazon. On that visit, our invented sect took on new life that more fully resembled those of Brazilian spiritual practices – a melding indigenous rites along with Catholicism and *candomblé*. Barcelos, at 400km from Manaus, the capital of the state of Amazonas, was isolated enough as a location for its own brand of religious expression to develop almost autonomously.

At Barcelos, we also added some distinct ethnic details to the story. The main characters of the film are Caucasians, Natives, Caboclos, and Mulatos, comprising a portrait of who we Brazilians truly are.

Working with Actors

We worked with professional actors, experienced in cinema acting, as well as theatre actors from Amazonas, and people who lived in Barcelos. Well before we started shooting, I had met and talked with several actors to form a group that was not only talented but also sincerely interested in and committed to the film's discourse.

As we approached principal photography, I rehearsed with all of them in a spacious room in Barcelos. My aim was to sensitize the actors to the themes at hand, but to avoid rehearsing actual scenes from the film. I was more interested in uniting them as a group - warming them up, physically, conceptually and emotionally. We went through theatrical exercises, such as voice and improvisation, and did Butoh in many places around Barcelos. We read books and watched films that I considered important for the process. Slowly we started framing the lines that were in the screenplay. Every Saturday we would present the results to our crew. Those Saturdays helped shape a conceptual link between the cast and the other creators. We took the cast to specific locations to block out sequences only during the last week before principal photography. Then, we choreographed sequences with Lula Carvalho, our director of photography.

By the time we started shooting, the emotional sketch of the Dead Girl had been outlined. The actors were warmed up and immersed in their respective characters, and also intimate with each other and relaxed in their relations with me and the rest of the crew. We created every scene together: me, as director, with the art director, actors and director of photography. The actors had memorized their lines but improvised their positions, scene to scene, as we shot. Overall, during the shoot it felt as if something like a ballet was being performed.

Music

I selected most of the songs to relate to the film emotionally and thematically. The procession chant was composed by Fátima Santágata, a “Daime” priestess from the Amazon, specifically for the film. The break dance sequence features Os Cariocas singing “Astronauta/Samba da Pergunta,” composed by Pingarilho and Marcos Vasconcelos. Daniel de Oliveira, who plays The Saint, during rehearsals in Barcelos, composed the blessing and end credits songs.

ABOUT THE CAST

Daniel de Oliveira plays The Saint

Oliveira is considered by critics and general public one of the finest actors of his generation. He has received numerous prizes for his portrayal of a wide array of characters in theater, film and television. His film credits include Helvecio Ratton’s “Batismo de Sangue,” Sergio Rezende’s “Zuzu Angel” and

André Ristum’s short film “14 Bis.” His voice lead the cast of the Portuguese dub of Mark Dindal’s “Chicken Little” and played a featured role in George Miller’s “Happy Feet.”

Jackson Antunes plays Father

Antunes has a long career in popular television. On film, he has appeared in Eliana Fonseca’s “Eliana em O Segredo dos Golfinhos,” Breno Silveira’s “Dois Filhos de Francisco,” Alonso Gonçalves’ “Confronto Final,” Elza Cataldo’s “Vinho de Rosas” and Luiz Alberto Pereira’s “Tapete Vermelho.” He is also a country music singer and a storyteller.

Juliano Cazarré plays Tadeu

Cazarré has worked on stage and in television. His film credits include José Eduardo Belmonte’s “A Conceção” and “Meu Mundo em Perigo,” Murilo Salles’ “Nome Próprio,” Johnny Araújo’s “O Magnata” and José Padilha’s “Tropa de Elite.”

Cássia Kiss plays Mother

Kiss is a well-known actress in theatre, film and television. Her first film role came in 1984, in Nelson Pereira dos Santos’ “Memórias do Cárcere.” She has appeared in João Batista de Andrade’s “O País dos Tenentes,” Walter Lima Jr.’s

“Ele, o Boto,” and Walter Salles’s first feature “A Grande Arte,” Luiz Alberto Pereira’s “Tapete Vermelho” and numerous other feature films.

Dira Paes plays Diana

Paes first appeared in John Boorman’s “The Emerald Forest,” then in Walter Lima Jr.’s “Ele, o Boto.” At the Festival of Brasilia she won Best Actress for her role in Rosemberg Cariry’s “Corisco & Dadá” and Best Supporting Actress for Sergio Silva’s “Anahy de las Misiones.” She appeared in Breno Silveira’s “Dois Filhos de Francisco” and numerous other films, winning honors along the way.

ABOUT THE CREW

Matheus Nachtergaele - Director

Nachtergaele is one of the most important contemporary Brazilian actors. With his widely recognized talent, he incessantly participates in stage, television and film work. He has appeared in many of the most noteworthy Brazilian films of recent years, including Fernando Meirelles’ “City of God” and Walter Salles’ “Central Station.” Other credits include Bruno Barreto’s “Four Days in September,” Sérgio Silva’s “Anahy de Las Misiones,” Eliane Caffé’s “Kenoma” and “Narradores de Javé,” Cao Hamburger’s “Castelo Ra-Tim-Bum,” Mauro Farias’ “O Enfermeiro,” Andrucha Waddington’s “Gêmeas,” Guel Arraes’ “O Auto da Compadecida,” Flávio Tambellini’s “Bufo & Spallanzani,” Herbert Brödl’s “Eclipse Solar,” Cláudio Assis’ “Amarelo Manga” and “Baixio da Bestas,” Lírio Ferreira’s “Árido Movie,” Luiz Alberto Pereira’s “Tapete Vermelho” and José Eduardo Belmonte’s “A Concepção,” which he also associate produced. Nachtergaele has been given important awards for his works in cinema, notably the consecutive prizes (2000-2001) for Best Acting at the *Grande Prêmio BR do Cinema Brasileiro*. He made his debut in soap operas in 2004 with the huge success of João Emanuel Carneiro’s “A Cor do Pecado” and worked in Glória Perez’s “América.” “The Dead Girl’s Feast” is his first feature film.

Vânia Catani - Producer

Catani produced the documentary television series Pedro Bial’s “The Names of Rosa,” which was nominated for the Emmy Awards 1998. The following year, she produced the Pedro Bial’s feature film “Other Stories,” and in 2000, the stage play of Jean-Claude Carrière’s “The Controversy.”

Vânia Catani founded Bananeira Filmes, which has consistently produced films that have traveled the international circuit and won numerous prizes, to wit, Beto Magalhães, Cao Guimarães and Lucas Bambozzi's 2001 feature documentary "The End of the Endless" (O Fim do Sem Fim), Eliane Caffé's 2003 feature film "The Story Tellers" (Narradores de Javé), Ernesto Solis's 2004 short "The Waiting" (A Espera). Upcoming is Brazilian actor Selton Mello's feature "December."

The company is currently developing several features, including Paulo Caldas' "Dirty Love," George Moura and José Luiz Villamarim's "Temporary Hell," and Ernesto Solis' "Animal Race." It is also co-producing two documentaries by Leandro HBL, "Favela on Blast" and "Margins," both presently in post-production.

Hilton Lacerda – Co-Writer

Lacerda started his career as assistant director on Lírio Ferreira's "O Crime da Imagem." He gained recognition with his screenplays for Paulo Caldas and Lírio Ferreira's "Baile Perfumado", Cláudio Assis' "Amarelo Manga" and Lírio Ferreira's "Árido Movie". The documentary "Cartola" was his first project as a director, co-directed by Lírio Ferreira.

He also wrote Cláudio Assis' "Baixio das Bestas" and the short "Texas Hotel" and Eliezer Filho's "Eu sou o Servo," and is developing with filmmaker Kiko Goifman the script for "FilmeFOBIA."

Lacerda has directed the short films "Simião Martiniano", "O Camelô do Cinema," together with journalist Clara Angelica, and "A Visita." He is presently developing with director Murilo Salles an adaptation of the book by Paulo Rodrigues "A Margem da Linha."

Lula Carvalho – Director of Photography

Carvalho was camera assistant in several films photographed by his award-winning father Walter Carvalho with such filmmakers as Walter Salles, Hector Babenco, João Moreira Salles and Ruy Guerra.

He worked also as a camera assistant with photographer Cesar Charlone on films by Kátia Lund, Fernando Meirelles, Breno Silveira and Andrucha Waddington. In 2002, he photographed and directed his own short film "Atrocidades Maravilhosas,"

He was director of photography on shorts and art documentaries and on Gustavo Acioli's feature "Incuráveis." Last year, in addition to "The Dead Girl's Feast," he was director of photography on Jose Padilha's "Tropa de Elite," for

which he won the prize for best cinematography in the Grand Prix of Vivo Brazilian Cinema in April 2008, and Selton Mello's upcoming "December." This year, he has directed photography on Walter Carvalho's "Budapeste," based on a book by Chico Buarque.

Renata Pinheiro – Art Director

Pinheiro has specialized in multimedia work, including scenarios for concerts, illustrations for CD covers and art direction on music videos. Her first film projects were on Cláudio Assis' short "Texas Hotel" and later his features "Amarelo Manga" and "Baixio das Bestas" and Lirio Ferreira's "Árido Movie." After "The Dead Girl's Feast," two films she worked on, Selton Mello's "December" and Suzana Amaral's "Hotel Atlântico," based on the novel by Gilberto Noll, are set for release later this year.

Principal Cast

Daniel de Oliveira (The Saint)

Jackson Antunes (Father)

Cássia Kiss (Mother)

Dira Paes (Diana)

Juliano Cazarré (Tadeu)

Ednelza Sahdo (Auntie)

Conceição Camarotti (Das Graças)

Laureane Gomes (Lucia)

Principal Crew

Director: Matheus Nachtergaele

Production: Vânia Catani

Screenplay: Matheus Nachtergaele, Hilton Lacerda

Photography: Lula Carvalho

Art Director: Renata Pinheiro

Costume Designer: Kika Lopes

Make Up: Marcos Freire

Sound: Paulo Ricardo

Editing: Karen Harley, Cao Guimarães

Music: Matheus Nachtergaele

Sound Editing: Waldir Xavier

Mixing: Ricardo Cutz

35mm – Color – Dolby SR-D – 1 :85 – 115 minutes

For downloadable stills, go to www.spierfilms.com

and click on World Sales