



FOX AND HARE

SAVE THE FOREST

Directed by Mascha Halberstad
(Oink's Revenge - Berlinale 2022)

LOGLINE

Strange things are happening in the forest! Owl has disappeared, mischievous Rats are terrorising the neighbourhood, and a lake is overflowing towards the home of our forest friends. Could this be the work of a megalomaniac Beaver? Fox and Hare are determined to find out. They must find their best friend Owl and a way to save their homes. It will push their friendship to the limit! This is the start of an exciting and fun adventure.

Style: 3D Animation

Length: 70 min

Genre: Adventure Comedy

Target audience: Family

Director: Mascha Halberstad

Writer: Fabie Hulsebos



Based on the book *Vos en Haas en de Bosbaas*

Written by Sylvia vanden Heede, Illustrated by Thé Tjong-Khing

Published by Lannoo publishers

Fox and Hare and their forest friends also appeared in a TV series produced in 2019 (26*11') and sold to over 20 territories, directed by Mascha Halberstad, in co-direction with Tom van Gestel and produced by Walking the Dog, Submarine and Doghouse Films.



WORLD PREMIÈRE

Sunday, February 18th

2:00 PM

Haus der Kulturen der Welt 1

Miriam Makeba Auditorium

German live voice-over | Headphones for OV





ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Mascha Halberstad is a Dutch filmmaker and illustrator. In 2017 she directed *The Great Hummimummi Christmas Special*, followed by directing the animation series *Fox and Hare* in 2019, which was awarded the Cinekid Audience Award in 2019 and the Ensor Best Animation Award in 2020. The series' adaptation of *Fox and Hare* will be her second feature. Her first one, *Oink's Revenge*, premiered in the Berlinale Generation program and was selected for many festivals worldwide.

SYNOPSIS

In a large clearing in the forest, BEAVER, a short furry animal with a large ego, inaugurates his masterpiece: a dam. With the help of two Rats he blocks the flow of a small river, causing the water to rise and flood the forest. In no time, a giant lake is created. Beaver is very proud of himself, but to his great disappointment, there is no one to admire his masterwork.

Elsewhere in the forest, FOX and HARE have thrown a party with their friends TUSK, PING WING, JACK, SEAL, MERMAID and OWL. After the party, Owl returns to his tree house to sit watch, as he does every night. When he discovers strange little streams of water flowing past his tree, he panics and flees into the forest, deeper and deeper... until he reaches a big lake that was not there before. He is so shocked that he passes out on the spot. The rising water lifts him up and he floats across the lake in his orange rubber ring until he reaches the dam and is welcomed by a strange creature he has never seen before: Beaver. Beaver is delighted to have Owl with him. Finally, someone to admire him!

The next day, Fox and Hare discover that Owl is missing. They set out with their friends to find him, but instead discover the strange lake. Where has all the water come from? They realise that Owl must be somewhere on that huge expanse of water.

While they search for Owl, the water is rising, threatening their homes and the forest. Beaver needs to take down the dam in order to save the forest. But is he willing to do that and for what price?

DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

With *Fox and Hare Save The Forest* you're following up on your *Fox and Hare* TV series from 2019 - when did the idea arise to make a feature film?

It actually wasn't my idea! It was Janneke Van De Kerkhof's idea, the producer. It arose while we made the TV series. We had all these assets, all these characters and sets and they thought "We have room to make a movie". So they chose a book from the *Fox and Hare* series, decided to make a feature film out of that and asked me to direct it. That's how it all came together.

This is your second feature film after *OINK* (2022) - how does the experience of making a feature-length film differ from making short films and a TV series?

It's a longer period, of course! With shorter films the movement of the story is different. In a feature film it's difficult to keep something interesting for a longer time. So that's a big difference! Also, I'm a total autodidact in the sense that I

never studied film. I don't know anything about scripts, it's all intuitive. Of course I watched a lot of films and I know a lot about film, but I don't know much about the technical side of things. Before *OINK* I was bit scared, but with *Fox and Hare* I felt like I knew how to do it. The other thing that was different, for me at least, is that I'm used to making films in stop-motion. That process is much more like doing live-action, because you can always interact while you're shooting the film. With 3D animation you can't. So your direction story-wise and character-wise has to be really upfront. For me that was difficult, because I am a person that likes to improvise, that likes to change things while we're going. I don't have the whole picture in my head immediately. It has to grow on me. In that sense, 3D animation is more difficult.

Could you talk about how specific animation style for the film was achieved and why it lends itself to bring these characters and the world they inhabit to life so beautifully?

Well, the books are in 2D and when I directed the TV series with the Belgian director Tom Van Gestel, we were discussing if we should make it in 2D or 3D. I said we have to make it in 3D, because if you make it in 2D, it has to be exactly like the books. With 3D, you have more space. Because I'm out of the stop-motion world, I wanted the stop-motion look. So the characters were made out of clay and 3D-scanned, so that's why it has this stop-motion feel, which is exactly what I wanted. Stop-motion is my terrain, you know, so I at least wanted it to have this specific look.

You're adapting the stories of *Fox and Hare* by Sylvia Vanden Heede - how do you go about adapting children's books for the big screen? What are some of the biggest challenges?

It's difficult to explain, because with *OINK* it was different. I went into a Dutch children's book store and I said "I want to make a Road Dahl kind of film" and they gave me *Oink's Revenge*, which hooked me and made me think

DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

"This is exactly what I want to make". With this movie it was different, because I was asked and the book was already chosen. But I was involved in the script development of course.

For me it's really important that when you adapt a book, you don't adapt it literally. I learned that with *OINK*. A movie is completely different than a book. You read the book in a different way. You have to change the timing and action to make it bigger. What is always most important to me is the characters, their development, their voices. I also don't see it as a children's film. I want to make a movie for the whole family, one that parents will love too. I want the audience to forget that they're looking at an animated film and really relate to the characters. That's very important to me. And that's what I try to do with the actors, mostly. For me the most important phase of making an animated film is working with the actors and developing the characters. Let's take Tusk for instance. I was looking for a voice for him during

the TV series, in which he has a much smaller role. While working with Rob Rackstraw, he was doing all kinds of accents, none of which made me laugh. Then I said "He looks like a German leather guy" and he started doing this accent that made me laugh so hard. He improvised a lot and so Tusk became bigger and bigger in the TV series, because he grew to be my favourite character. The same thing now happened with the rats in the movie.

I told Rob and Dan Skinner, who also plays Fox, that I wanted a "Peaky Blinders" kind of voice. So they start working and as soon as I start laughing they know "Ok, now we hit the right note". Then we develop characters through the voices. With Beaver, in the script he's a very one-note kind of character, only narcissistic. So I said to Rob "He has to be a mix between Donald Trump and Owen Wilson". Of course there is a script, but you have to feel something with a character or a person. That's how I work and that's how it develops and enriches the movie.

The film goes to show how material

possessions aren't - or shouldn't be - as important as real friendship. Do you feel this message is now more important than ever for children?

Well, yeah! Just think about our cell phones. The most important material possession we all have. But I have to say that I'm not a "message" kind of director in that sense. I actually try to downplay the message. I do try to get it in there, but lightheartedly, with a laugh. I don't want to force it. When the movie was selected for Berlinale, Sebastian Markt, who is Head of Berlinale Generation, wrote to me: "The ability to share a room with people to laugh and laugh is a privilege in these times, and laugh we did, led by your film, its charming characters and mild (but much appreciated) wackiness!" I really liked that sentence. I want people to leave the theater with a smile. We live in really hard times right now and sometimes it's good to just laugh. That for me is even more important than all the other messages.

DIRECTOR'S INTERVIEW

The film's soundtrack is really wonderful – could you talk about your collaboration with composer André Dziezuk and the use of music in your films in general?

It was hard for me because I had just done *OINK* and I was not gonna have time to recoup from that. So the foremost reason I wanted to do *Fox and Hare Save The Forest* was because I wanted to work with André again, who had already done the TV series. He's a genius! We became really good friends and love to work together. You can probably tell, because the music is so fantastic. It's funny, because when he did the TV series he made mockups for the music and he used flutes... and I hate flutes! So I told him I want more of a "Stevie Wonder keyboard sound" for the music. He then changed it and developed the whole music for the TV series, which was just fantastic.

When scoring the movie, for example, the Beaver song wasn't there. There was this huge introduction of the lodge in the script that to me felt like it would take too long.

So I said we have to make a song. André composed the music and Rob, who's doing five voices in the films - he's a genius, too - wrote lyrics and it developed into this fantastic song. With André it always goes like this: I say something like "I want a bit of Gospel" and then it's like he can look inside my mind and make my idea 20 million times better. With the end credits songs it was similar. I asked Rob and Dan to improvise and talk over the end credits and then they did that! So brilliant. This is what I love about filmmaking. It's a process and you have to work together. But this was all upfront, of course, before the animation happened. We already developed all the songs.

This is the second time a film of yours premieres at the Berlinale. What does it mean to you to return to the festival and present the film here?

I'm stoked! I know how difficult it is to get into Berlin, especially with a feature film. First of all I'm

very honored but also happy, because it's my reputation I have to live up to. When I was here in 2022 with *OINK* it was still on the edge of Covid, so it was kind of a half-festival. So I'm really happy to now go into the full festival experience. I really loved it and I loved that afterwards the kids had such great questions about the movie. I really like the German kids in general, they ask really good questions and tend to really think about things.



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION COMPANIES

A CO-PRODUCTION BETWEEN NL, BE, LU



With headquarters in Amsterdam, Los Angeles and London, Submarine is an award-winning production company that develops and produces feature films, scripted series, documentaries, animation and transmedia projects. Submarine has established itself as an innovative company, bringing together established and emerging international filmmakers and creators from Europe and the US to produce content with true international appeal for over two decades.

The company's projects include original scripted animation series *Undone* season 2 for Amazon Prime Video, Richard Linklater's *Apollo 10 1/2* feature for Netflix, the coproductions *Where is Anne Frank* directed by Ari Folman and *They shot the Piano player*, from Oscar nominees Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal which premiered during TIFF 2023. The animated feature *Coppelia* premiered at the Annecy International Film Festival 2021 and the latest production *Fox and Hare save the Forest*, will premiere at the Berlinale 2024 in the Generation Kplus program section.

Submarine's animation slate features a multitude of award-winning films and series, which are as varied in style as in their target demographic. Submarine Animation prides itself in its ability not to be confined to just one look or technique – putting the needs of each individual project front-and-center. As such, they work with 2D as well as 3D animation, digital as well as traditional crafts, and live-action/animation hybrids.





Founded in 2012 by Pierre Urbain and David Mouraire, the independent production company DOGHOUSE FILMS develops and produces high-quality feature films with clear messages and strong artistic values, whether they are adult or family-oriented. Within its own animation studio, a core of 2D and 3D in-house artists, makes DOGHOUSE FILMS not just a financial partner, but also a strong and innovative source of artistic proposals, from storyboard to compositing.

After the releases of *Pachamama* by Juan Antin, *Fritzi*, a revolutionary tale by Ralf Kukulka and Matthias Bruhn or *Where is Anne Frank* by Ari Folman, all of which address a creative vision of world history, DOGHOUSE FILMS presented in 2022 at Annecy official competition an adaptation of novels by Haruki Murakami *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman* directed by Pierre Földes, awarded with a Jury Special Mention.

In 2023 the social fable *Nina and the Hedgehog's Secret* by Alain Gagnol and Jean-Loup Felicioli is part of the official selection at Annecy.



Walking The Dog, a Belgian animation studio established in 1999 by Anton Roebben and Eric Goossens, has been a pioneer in traditional and cutting-edge CGI animation, reshaping the European animation film industry. Through collaboration with both established and emerging artists across Europe, Walking The Dog stands as a hub for compelling experiences. Known for its commitment to artistic excellence, studios achievements include Oscar-nominated classics such as *The Triplets of Belleville* (2003) by Sylvain Chomet and the enchanting *The Secret of Kells* (2010) by Tomm Moore.

The allure of Walking The Dog extends to projects such as *A Monster in Paris* (César 2012), *The Congress* (Cannes 2012), *Jack and the Cuckoo Clock Heart* (Berlinale 2014), *Another Day of Life* (EFA 2018), *Where is Anne Frank* (Cannes 2021), *Richard The Stork 2* (Annecy 2023), and highly anticipated tale *Fox and Hare Save The Forest* (Berlinale 2024).

Currently the studio gears up for upcoming releases - *The Magnificent Life of Marcel Pagnol* by Sylvain Chomet and *Outfoxed!* by Paul Bolger.





 SUBMARINE

 DOGHOUSE Films

 WD
WALKING THE DOG

CONTACTS

INTERNATIONAL PRESS

MM Filmpresse

Sylvia Müller

+49 (0)30 - 41 71 57 23

mueller@mm-filmpresse.de

Nikolas Friedrich

friedrich@mm-filmpresse.de

INTERNATIONAL SALES

URBAN SALE

us@urbansales.eu

+33 762 99 49 19