

Kali

the little vampire

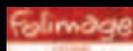
A FILM BY

Regina Pessoa

NARRATION CHRISTOPHER PLUMMER

PRESS KIT

CO-PRODUCED BY FOLIMAGE STUDIOS, CICLOPE FILMES,
THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA AND STUDIO GDS



THE FILM

He lives in the shadows. The one who inspires fear. Other children don't even dream that he exists. But the young vampire Kali does exist, and suffers from not being able to live in the light. One day, while once again watching the other young boys play beside the train tracks, he breaks from his isolation and discovers that because of who—and what—he is, he can make a difference in others' lives. In a narration masterfully voiced by Oscar-winner Christopher Plummer, Kali, now an old man, remembers the day he finally made peace with himself. After having dealt with a young girl's fear in *A Noite* (1999) and the discomfort experienced by others in *Tragic Story with Happy Ending* (2005), Regina Pessoa concludes her trilogy on childhood by following a child's path to self-acceptance. A poetic and beautiful tale, *Kali the Little Vampire* is a reminder that there is a place for every one of us under the sun. Even for the creatures of the night.



REGINA PESSOA



PHOTO: NINON PEDNAULT

Regina Pessoa was born in 1969 and grew up in a small Portuguese village close to the city of Coimbra. She spent her childhood in the countryside, listening to family stories and watching closely as her uncle used charcoal to draw on the walls of her grandmother's house. This was the first step in her career as an animator... But it wasn't until her classes in painting at the art school in Porto that she truly began to study the full range of animation techniques. In 1992, she began working as an animator in the Portuguese studio Filmógrafo – Estúdio de Cinema de Animação do Porto, where she also worked on various films by Abi Feijó (*The Brigands*, *Fado Lusitano*, *Clandestine*). In 1999, she made her first short, *A Noite*, by filming her engravings on plaster using 35mm film. It tells the story of a young girl who is scared of the dark. In *Tragic Story with Happy Ending* (2005), the second in her trilogy of films about childhood, Pessoa tells the tale of a young girl who must come to terms with her own deafening heartbeat. This extraordinary work, which combines engraving on glossy paper with computer-assisted animation techniques, won 50 international awards, including the Cristal from the Annecy International Animation Film Festival in 2006, and it remains the Portuguese animated film that has garnered the greatest number of prizes. *Tragic Story with Happy Ending* was co-produced by the Portuguese studio Ciclope, the French studio Folimage and the National Film Board of Canada. *Kali the Little Vampire*, her third short film, was conceived and created entirely on a tablet computer using digital engraving techniques. It is a co-production between Portugal, France, Switzerland and Canada.

INTERVIEW WITH THE FILMMAKER



***Kali the Little Vampire* concludes your trilogy on childhood, which also includes *A Noite* and *Tragic Story with Happy Ending*. Did you start off with the idea of these three films forming a whole?**

No. Not at all. I had the idea of doing a trilogy after finishing *Tragic Story*. It was then that I realized I had to extend my reflections on the theme of childhood—that I had started in a particular direction with the first two films, and I had to see it through to the end. In *A Noite* we meet a child who is afraid of the dark. That's a very common childhood fear, and it symbolizes a fear of the world, a fear of the unknown—a fear of becoming adult. The child in the film does not really trust the world, and that anxiety is never resolved. In *Tragic Story* there is some progress. The character still feels a lack of self-confidence and doesn't trust in his ability to integrate into the world around him. But he finds himself more in the world, surrounded by others. A magical transformation helps him feel better and elicits admiration from those who scorned him. But since we remain in the world of fantasy and of children's imagination, the film doesn't present a real solution to the problem. So I thought I would pursue that train of thought with a character who comes to accept himself, and who also understands that his weaknesses can also be his strengths.

Kali could have been a “normal” little boy. Why make him a little vampire instead?

Making him a vampire allowed me to dive head first into a metaphorical universe, while at the same time linking this film to *A Noite*, since vampires are creatures of the night and the character in my first film is afraid of the dark. Kali, who represents the dark,



does not feel at ease in it but ends up accepting it. Also, vampires survive by turning other people into vampires. Kali is like that: he dreams of being like others. He hangs onto objects that are lost or have been thrown away by other children. In his own way, he absorbs others around him. All that made sense to me.

What is the significance of Kali's name?



The name just came to me out of the blue, but as I thought more about it and realized it was the name of the Hindu goddess of death and darkness, it seemed to fit. Kali is a goddess who destroys in order to create again – who gives cosmic significance to the universe. My film isn't on the cosmic level, of course, but that adds a few small details which enrich it, I think.

Are there other symbolic elements in the film?

That wasn't my intention in the beginning. None of it was done consciously or by design. When I was adding one or another element, I was primarily concerned with its importance to the story. But afterwards, as I did some research, I realized a number of things. For example, I had thought of the joker in the house of cards as a purely narrative element. But it turns out to also be laden with meaning. The joker is the fool at the court. He is the one who is rejected – just like Kali. But he also plays a very important role. He is the only one who can laugh at the king without being punished. That means he is the only one who can tell the truth. Similarly, when we play cards we typically don't use the joker, except in certain games in which it is the most powerful card.



What animation techniques do you use in *Kali*?

In all of my films I work in black and white. And they have all used different techniques – I've even done engraving. I have to confess, though, that *Kali* was a real technical challenge. Given how much the technology has improved, my producers suggested I try making a film that was entirely done on the computer. At first, that seemed impossible to me, because I've always worked by hand, and loved the physical contact with the work I was creating. But my producers provided a lot of encouragement, and gave me opportunities to do research and training – and in the end I really enjoyed it! [Laughs]

What are your main aesthetic influences and sources of inspiration?

As far as animation goes, I really like the work of Gianluigi Toccafondo, Jean-Loup Felicioli and Alain Gagnol, and Roberto Catani. And I have been very influenced by the work of illustrators like the Italian artist Lorenzo Mattotti. As far as painters go, I have been very impressed by Georges de La Tour's work with light and shadows. And I love expressionist cinema – the strong contrasts between black and white. Toccafondo was a real inspiration for *Kali* – not so much in terms of pure animation, because he starts with images of reality that he transforms, but for the fluidity of his shapes. The images in *Kali* are much softer and rounder than in *Tragic Story*, and that comes from Toccafondo.

Christopher Plummer is the voice of *Kali*. Did you write the script with him in mind? And what was it like working with him?

When I was writing, it was always with the voice of an older man in mind, because I wanted viewers to know that *Kali* does not die – that he winds up finding his place and carrying on his life. It was in conversation with my producers and advisers that Mr. Plummer's name first came up. And I am very, very happy about that, because



he has had a magnificent career. It all came together wonderfully. I met up with my Canadian producer, Julie Roy, in New York, and from there we drove through the countryside to meet Mr. Plummer at a small recording studio deep in the woods. We were very nervous, but he set us at ease right away. During the recording session he even gave us a few notes on how to improve the script. Here he was, a film icon, and he was so humble, so generous, and so patient. It was amazing to have travelled from another continent in order to work with Mr. Plummer for one day, in the middle of the woods. Sometimes I wonder if I dreamt the whole thing!

Tell us about the music in the film.

Music is central to all my films. I listen to music when I work. It helps me draw. When I was doing the storyboard for *Kali* I was listening a lot to the Swiss group The Young Gods. I found their music went really well with my images – whether they were moments when Kali was being introspective, or action sequences, such as the scene in which the train passes by. I didn't know any members of The Young Gods though, and I didn't have much hope that they would do it. In the end, a Swiss friend helped put me in touch with them, and they were very friendly – very modest. In order to help make it possible for us to work together, Georges Schwizgebel – a great Swiss animation director whom I love – very generously helped us make the film a Swiss co-production. I am delighted with the result. The music really does a lot for the atmosphere of the film.

TEAM

Script, storyboards, visual design,
direction, animation, backgrounds
and digital engravings

Regina Pessoa

Voice

Christopher Plummer

Fernando Lopes

Music

The Young Gods

Script advisor

Paul Driessen

Art consultant, animatics, editing,
compositing and credits

Abi Feijó

Assistant director, digital engraving
and compositing

Nicolas Liguori

Animation

Marc Robinet

Laurent Repiton

Luc Chamberland

Jorge Ribeiro

3D animation

Luís Félix

Benjamin Charbit

Digital engravings

André Marques

Sara Naves

Alexandre Siqueira

Additional compositing

Benoît Razy

Musicians

Franz Treichler

Vincent Hänni

Bernard Trontin

Alain Monod

Sound designer

Olivier Calvert

Foley

Lise Wedlock

Voice effects

Hugolin Chevrette

Sound studios

Tyg Studios

Presence Studio

Estúdio Animanostra

Sound engineers

Franz Treichler

Jon Russel

Paulo Curado

Re-recording

Serge Boivin

Shelley Craig

Jean Paul Vialard

Re-recording studio

NFB Studio

Digital imaging specialists

Pierre Plouffe

Sue Gourley

Technical coordinator

Julie Laperrière

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Denis Gathelier

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Technicolor Montréal

Tobis Portuguesa

Administrators

Luís Pereira

Diane Régimbald

Distribution – sales

Dominique Templier – Jérémy Mourlan

Salette Ramalho –

Agência da Curta Metragem

Christine Noel

Claude Luyet

Translations

Clare Kitson

Harry Cleven

Kathleen Fee

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Emmanuel Bernard

Francine Langdeau

Production manager

Solenne Blanc

Development producer

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Pascal Le Nôtre

Georges Schwizgebel

Claude Luyet

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