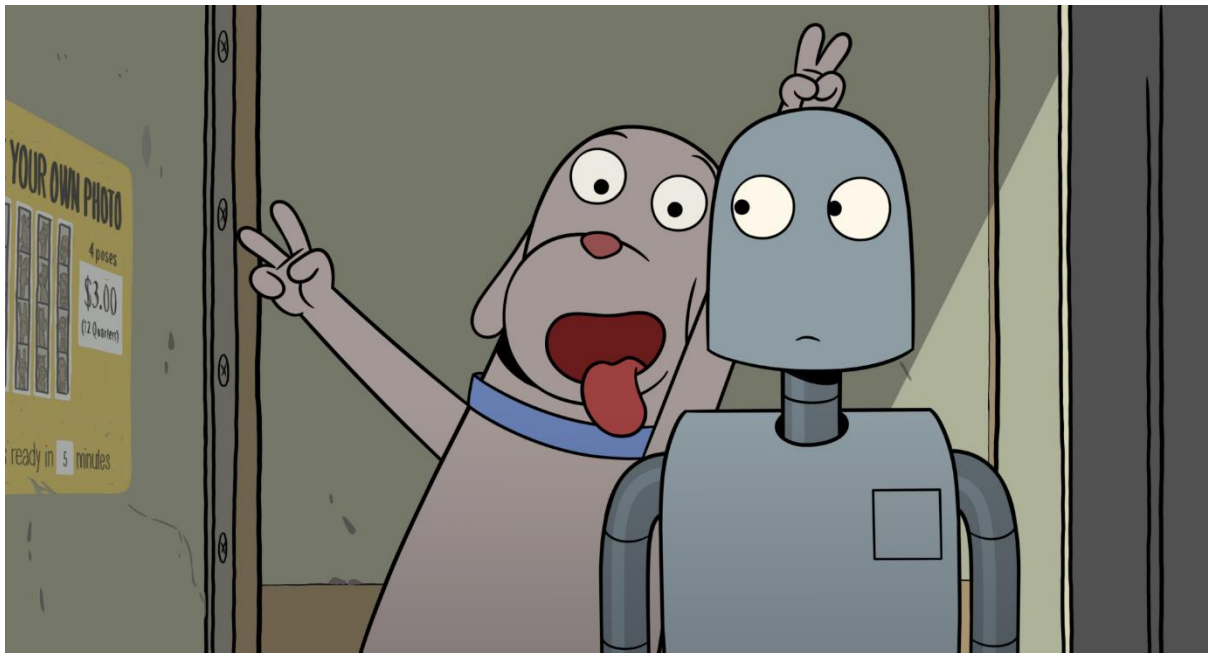




MADMAN



ROBOT DREAMS

DIRECTED BY **PABLO BERGER**

RUNNING TIME **101 Mins**

RATED **TBC**

MADMAN ENTERTAINMENT PUBLICITY CONTACT:

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SYNOPSIS

Dog lives in Manhattan and he's tired of being alone. One day he decides to build himself a robot, a companion. Their friendship blossoms, until they become inseparable. To the rhythm of 80's NYC. One summer night, Dog, with great sadness, is forced to abandon Robot at the beach. Will they ever meet again?

ROBOT DREAMS is the first animation film by award-winning director Pablo Berger (*Blancanieves*).

A story about friendship, its importance, and its fragility. A love letter to the Big Apple.

INTRODUCTION

ROBOT DREAMS is the third film with which Arcadia Motion Pictures has accompanied the personal filmography of Pablo Berger. After the adventure with the multi-award winning *Blancanieves* and the surprising *Abracadabra*, ROBOT DREAMS has been a great challenge both for Pablo and for Arcadia. It was his and our first film in 2D animation.

Pablo is not aware (or perhaps he is...) that his way of working ideal for the workflow in animation: he storyboards everything that he shoots, and he shoots everything he storyboards. He is a very precise filmmaker. So his capacity for prior visualization and his great command of cinematic language have been the "guide" for the large team he has incorporated into the different processes, during what has now been over four year.

Pablo Berger is a filmmaker who never stops evolving and exploring new areas in cinema, and for ROBOT DREAMS he wanted to bring together professionals from live action and from the world of animation, with outstanding teams from both sides. With the regular collaborators but also with new incorporations. And the result could not be better, we are having our premier at the Cannes Festival, the most important film festival in the world.

Sandra Tapia
Arcadia Motion Pictures

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

ORIGIN

Over ten years ago, when I was embarked on my chimerical, but finally real, endeavor of making the film *Blancanieves*, I came across the graphic novel *Robot Dreams* by Sara Varon. I was gripped from the first pages. I didn't read it, I devoured it. Like all good tales, its story took me to an unknown but recognizable place, where I felt at home. I was captivated by its temporal structure, it made me laugh and cry, and most importantly it made me reflect on friendship.

While reading it I remembered my great friends, the ones who are still by my side, but above all, those who moved away or whom I lost along the way... I can say that *Robot Dreams* has reconciled me with my conflicting feelings about the loss of loved ones. Accepting and recovering from loss, undoubtedly, is the intellectual motor and the emotional reason for making the animated version of ROBOT DREAMS.

THE WORLD OF SARA VARON

Sara Varon, the author of the homonymous graphic novel which inspired ROBOT DREAMS, is an artist with a world of her own. Her stories are fables inhabited by the most diverse animals with human behavior, who coexist in a recognizable, nostalgic New York. The diversity of their fauna reflects perfectly in the cocktail of races and ethnicities that live in the Big Apple, giving her stories a greater universality.

Our interpretation on the world of Sara Varon has been from a respectful place, but also from a place of total freedom. Fortunately, from the start, Sara gave us "carte blanche" to create "our" particular ROBOT DREAMS and adapt it to a new medium, film.

The graphic style of both the graphic novel and the film ROBOT DREAMS derives from the "*Ligne-Claire*" style, with origins in the French-Belgian school of Hergé, the author of Tintin as its greatest exponent. It is characterized by a narrative way of representing reality using continuous clean lines, flat colors and limited shadows. A visual punch. A way of drawing that made a comeback with great popularity in the 80s with the comics of Serge Clerc, Yves Chaland or Floc'h. In Spain, its ambassador was the publication *Cairo* and its greatest representative Daneil Torres. A style, the *ligne claire*, which today is again very present in the comic world thanks to Adrian Tomine or Chris Ware. A big part of my love for cinema comes from comics.

ROBOT DREAMS, the film, was thought as a comic turned into animated drawings. To achieve this, we have used the characteristics typical of both media and the "Deep Focus" techniques, meaning all elements in every shot.

WRITING WITH IMAGES

It has been over a century since the first animation film, *Fantasmagorie* (1908) by Émil Cohl. A short film that retains its magic and its ability to amaze us based only on the power of the line. Of the image. That is the essence of cinema, writing with images. As a filmmaker it is a challenge and at the same time an enormous pleasure to write stories without using dialog.

After my film *Blancanieves*, I wanted to go back with ROBOT DREAMS to the essence of pure cinema. But this time from another angle, that of animation. A form of representation and storytelling that has no limits.

The films by Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd have been mandatory viewings for the ROBOT DREAMS crew. The wisdom, humanity and humor present in their work have been a great source of inspiration.

THE WORLD OF DREAMS

An essential part of this film are the dreams of our protagonist, Robot. Cinema is daydreaming. Robot's dreams are a delirious, Freudian, amazing expression of his most intimate desire to meet his friend Dog again. It's his "return to Ithaca".

One of my reference comics, and graphic oracles, is *Little Nemo in Slumberland* (1905). A comic strip where the imagination of its author, Winsor McCay, takes us along with little Nemo on his journey to the "World of Dreams", Slumberland. A place where everything is possible and in which the unexpected narrative twists follow on endlessly. With ROBOT DREAMS our aim has been the same: to put the spectator on a rollercoaster of continuous surprises.

ART DIRECTION

As a fan of comics and illustration I have been an admirer of the work of José Luis Ágreda for over twenty-five years. He is one of our country's most important illustrators. An artist with a personal stamp, but in constant transformation.

He has an impeccable technique and a unique sense of color. His exceptional work in the animation film Buñuel in *The Labyrinth of the Turtles* (2019) and his experience in the prestigious animation studio Cartoon Saloon, made him my first option as Art Director for ROBOT DREAMS.

A great team of over twenty artists under José Luis' direction developed concepts, characters, backgrounds, props, color script... the Robot Dreams world. Particular mention for the person in charge of character design, Daniel Fernández Casas. A young designer of enormous talent who has worked on some of the most important films in recent animation such as Klaus or the latest film by Benjamin Renner for the Illumination studio. His first mission on ROBOT DREAMS was to "redraw" our protagonists from the comic to a new medium, cinema. He gave them a fabulous make-over. Then, along with his team, he had to design the most varied jungle of New Yorkers. Hundreds. Sorry, thousands of extras. Be on the lookout.

THE DREAMED FILM

In preparing all my previous projects, I've always made a detailed storyboard of the entire film. For me, the storyboard is the treasure map. "The dreamed and edited film" as Hitchcock said. That is why I felt my move to animation as something natural. Without being aware of it, my previous work process was perfect for the dynamics of animation.

I used my experience in live action cinema to visualize the story in animated images. A cinematic language where the editing, the composition, the point of view, the visual poetry, the ellipsis and off-screen were essential elements when it came to telling the story of Dog and Robot.

The process of doing the storyboard and the animatics of the film took a full year. We were fortunate in having the storyboard artist Maca Gil, who had just worked on *My Father's Dragon*. Maca is a great artist who with two strokes is capable of expressing a range of emotions or representing very complex shots with precision. The team was completed by the editor Fernando Franco and the music editor Yuko Harami.

Fernando and I had worked together on *Blancanieves*, and our experience had been so incredible that we were looking for an opportunity to repeat it. For a director his editor is like his dance partner, and Fernando and I dance wonderfully together.

Yuko Harami has been the music editor of all my films. There is no making them without her. In ROBOT DREAMS she established the musical concept, looking for and manipulating pre-existing music or “temps” to give emotion and melodic unity to the animatics. Yuko has a unique sensitivity in the selection of this music, which later is of great use for inspiring the composers in their final musical pieces. Something particular of animation is the animated storyboard or animatic. The “almost” final edited film. So before starting production, that is, animating, you can already see a rough cut of the finished film. A luxury.

As a writer and director, this is, undoubtedly the time that the final result is closest to “my dreamed film”.

THE ANIMATION

ROBOT DREAMS is a film that looks at the past, at traditional animation, but it is conceived for today’s audience. The film doesn’t exclude any kind of spectator. Classic animation, in two dimensions, drawn frame by frame, has its own expressiveness, humanity and empathy. In ROBOT DREAMS we have sought a fluidity and a line that reflect the story and its characters with simplicity. And coming from working with actors, I have given maximum importance to the eyes. Our animated characters’ gaze has been the essential element in obtaining performances full of life. In an animation film, in some way, the animators are the actors, they are the ones who give life to each character. Working with them has, definitely, been one of the most gratifying experiences on this long journey.

During the animation stage of the project I relied on the great artist and animation director Benoît Feroumont. When I saw his last short film *Le Lion et le Singe* I immediately thought that he would be the ideal collaborator for ROBOT DREAMS. *Le Lion et le Singe* is a wonderful short film full of truth, tenderness and humor. And in addition, also without dialogue. Benoît has great experience as director of animation and has worked on outstanding films such as *The Triplets of Belleville* by Sylvain Chomet, or *The Book of Kells* by Tom Moore. His know how and sensitivity have been essential to lead successfully a team of over sixty animators.

MUSIC AND SOUND

Collaborating again with Alfonso de Vilallonga, music composer for my films *Blancanieves* and *Abracadabra*, has been, once again, an enormous pleasure. Alfonso is an eclectic, surprising composer, with a prodigious capacity for creating music full of emotion, feelings and rhythm. In ROBOT DREAMS he has done it again thanks to the delicate piano melodies and the cool jazz, a very New York urban sound.

The film’s sound design is a jungle of sound. From domestic environments and noises to the loud, bustling streets of the different neighborhoods in NYC. The sound design for Robot Dreams is the third dimension. Fabiola Ordoyo, with whom I worked on my previous film, *Abracadabra*, is an alchemist of sound, capable of achieving the perfect color for any atmosphere or sound effect. But unlike in live action film where the base and backbone is the “location sound” recorded on set, in an animation film the designer has to create absolutely all the sounds. A challenge.

DIRECTOR BIO

Pablo Berger – Director

Pablo Berger is an acclaimed Spanish director thanks to one of the most renowned and original films in recent European cinema: the Spanish-French co- production *Blancanieves* (2012). Among other distinctions, it garnered 10 Goya Awards, an Ariel for Best Ibero- American Film, represented Spain for the 2013 Oscars and won a Silver Shell for Best Female Lead as well as the Special Jury Prize at the San Sebastian Film Festival. *Blancanieves* was also nominated for a 2014 César Award for Best Foreign Film and for the European Film Awards in the Best Film and Best Director categories, as well as winning the prize for Best European Costume Design.

Pablo Berger is a Knight of the Arts and Letters of France and a member of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Berger began his directing career with the multi-award-winning cult short *Mama* (1988). He then got a Masters in Directing from New York University, where he directed the Emmy nominated short film *Truth and Beauty*. He lived in New York for a decade. His debut, the Spanish-Danish co-production *Torremolinos 73* (2003), won several national and international prizes, including the Gold Biznaga for Best Picture at the Malaga Film Festival, and was nominated for the Goya Awards in four categories. *Torremolinos 73* was also one of Spain's biggest box office hits that year. In 2017 he wrote and directed *Abracadabra*. Again finalist for representing Spain at the Oscars and it garnered 8 Goya nominations. *ROBOT DREAMS* it is his first animation film and his third collaboration between Arcadia Motion Pictures and Pablo Berger.

CREW

Director & Screenwriter | Pablo Berger
Producers | Ibon Cormenzana, Ignasi Estapé, Sandra Tapia
Pablo Berger, Ángel Durández
Co-producers | Jérôme Vidal, Sylvie Pialat, Benoît Quainon
Art Director | José Luis Ágreda
Animation Director | Benoît Feroumont
Production Manager | Julian Larrauri
Character Designer | Daniel Fernandez
Editor | Fernando Franco
Composer | Alfonso de Vilallonga
Sound Designer | Fabiola Ordoyo
Music Editor | Yuko Harami
Audio Mixer | Steven Ghouti

Based on the graphic novel by Sara Varon

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