

## CMG Closes Robust Pre-Sales on Gullane, Salles' 'Noah's Ark' – Variety

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### Movie reflects the build in industry, financing and ambitions of animation in Brazil

ANNECY, France — Produced by Gullane, Walter Salles' Videofilmes, Felipe Sabino and Daniel Greco's NIP and Globo Filmes and sold by Edward Noeltner's Cinema Management Group, Sergio Machado's "Noah's Ark," a flagship for the high artistic and commercial ambitions of Brazilian animation, has struck eye-catching pre-sales across the whole of Latin America and Asia.

News of the pre-sales come as Financial Film Services, a thirty year-old investment banking firm, is in negotiations to take a substantial minority equity stake in "Noah's Ark," also bringing on board a Canadian animation studio to join as a partner.

Domestic distribution in Brazil will be handled by Imagem Films, one of the country's – and indeed Latin America's – top independent movie distributors, another sign of the perceived market potential of the movie.

Noeltner made full use of Bordeaux's Cartoon Movie and Hong Kong's FilmArt to not only pre-sell "Noah's Ark" in small-to-midsized territories – a traditional strategy – but position "Noah's Ark" for the Cannes Festival.

Many of the biggest pre-sales came at Cannes, however, an edition notable for buyer's hunger for top family entertainment, where CMG showed initial animation footage.

In major deals to date, IDC has acquired all Spanish-speaking Latin America. China has sold to Flame Node, South Korea to First Run Inc., Russia, the Ukraine and the Baltic states to Voxell. Fox has inked a pan-Asia pay TV deal.

In Europe, Kino Swiat has secured Polish distribution. Rights to Switzerland has gone to Praesens Films, which is handling several of CMG's animated titles including the Academy Award-nominated "Loving Vincent." Turkey (TME), Portugal (Films 4 You), ex-Yugoslavia (2i Film), the Czech and Slovak Republics (Bohemia), Israel (Film House) and the Middle East (Front Row Filmed Ent.) have also closed.

CMG has inked with Blue Lantern for Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar; the Philippines went to Crystal Sky, India to MVP.

"We have had important numbers in pre-sales in the past with projects like 'Amazonia' and 'Carandiru.' But, without doubt, the work being made in partnership with CMG on 'Noah's Ark' is one of the most important pre-sales in Gullane's history," said producer Fabiano Gullane.

Noeltner added: "The combination of a well-known story re-told in a humorous manner with a clever twist was the hallmark of one of CMG's earliest animation successes. We are truly delighted to be working with Gullane and Walter Salles on this unique and fun-filled musical adventure."

Based on the Noah's Ark story, the film turns on two adventurous minstrel mice – Tito, a charismatic musician who's naturally elegant and always accompanied by his guitar; Vini, a charismatic poet suffering terrible stage-fright, who attempts to board the Ark in drag – who embark on a humorous new telling to the music of Vinicius de Moraes's Noah's Ark children's songs.

Almost all the animals will be inspired in real people. The lead mice, for instance, will have features and characteristics that resemble Tom Jobim and De Moraes, the most renowned names of Bossa Nova, Machado said.

Prior to starting to work on "Noah's Ark," Machado and his team conducted extensive research in order to understand the most adequate technique to bring to the screen the lyricism and irreverent humor of the De Moraes' songs, Machado said. An important source of inspiration was the work of Brazilian cartoonists. The technique finally used is 3D, although Machado is looking for "a certain daringness of style and aesthetic originality more commonly found in 2D movies and stop motion."

For Machado "Noah's Ark" can be interpreted in many layers: it is a music adventure full of humor that is based on a tale present in almost all of the cultures worldwide; it is also a political adventure that speaks of greed, tyranny and oppression.

One of the interesting aspects of the script, the director maintained, is the presence of a second ark, with a cockroach as its captain, that transports the "refugee" animals – the minorities of the animal kingdom like laggards, lice, mosquitos, and mice. These animals – treated with tenderness in the songs of Vinicius – will save the Big Ark from imminent wreckage.

"There is also, at the end of the story, an ecological and anti-war message: the animals – after countless disputes and confusion – finally learn that we are all in the same boat and planet: We all need to join forces and give up privileges in order to survive," Machado observed.

"Noah's Ark" has not come out of the blue, but rather is a result of the dramatic build in Brazilian animation over the last decade, said Sabino and Greco at NIP, Gullane's longtime animation partner in a relationship which dates back to "Rio 2096." They also serve as executive partners on "Tito and the Birds," which competes at this year's Annecy.

The awards and nominations received by Luis Bolognese's "Rio 2096" and Ale Abreu's "The Boy and the World" were a big turning point for Brazilian animation, showing the world and also us Brazilians that we are capable of creating and delivering very innovative films which have a positive reception in the international market," they said in a statement.

"We are now very happy and proud of 'Tito and the Birds' for giving continuity to this. 'Noah's Ark' is the next big step for us" they added.

They continued: "We have never produced as much as we are producing right now. There are currently more than 40 TV series and around 15 feature films in production. It is the perfect ground for us to keep evolving as an industry. We believe that "Noah's Ark" is going to play a key role in its future."