

# THE FEVER

(A Febre)

A film by Maya Da-Rin



98 mins / Brazil/France/Germany 2019/ In Tukano and Portuguese

Locarno 2019 – Best Actor and Fipresci Prize

Release 6<sup>th</sup> August 2021

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## SYNOPSIS

Manaus is an industrial city surrounded by the Amazon rainforest. Justino, member of the indigenous Desana people, works as a security guard at the cargo port. Since the death of his wife, his main company is his youngest daughter with whom he lives in a house on the outskirts of town. Nurse at a health clinic, Vanessa is accepted to study medicine in Brasilia and will need to be leaving soon.

As the days go by, Justino is overcome by a strong fever. During the day, he fights to stay awake at work. During the night, a mysterious creature follows his footsteps. But soon the tedious routine of the harbour is broken by the arrival of a new guard. Meanwhile, his brother's visit makes Justino remember the life in the forest, from where he left twenty years ago. Between the oppression of the city and the distance of his native village in the forest, Justino can no longer endure an existence without place.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo sets for download – as [Tif files](#) or as [jpg files](#)



## CAST

Justino  
Vanessa  
Everton  
Jalmira  
André  
Marta  
Wanderlei

**Regis Myrupu**  
**Rosa Peixoto**  
**Johnatan Sodré**  
**Kaisaro Jussara Brito**  
**Edmildo Vaz Pimentel**  
**Anunciata Teles Soares**  
**Lourinelson Wladmir**

## CREW

Director  
Script

**Maya Da-Rin**  
**Maya Da-Rin, Miguel Seabra**  
**Pedro Cesarino**

Director of Photography  
Sound

**Bárbara Alvarez**  
**Felipe Schultz Mussel**  
**Breno Furtado. Romain Ozanne**

Art Director  
Editor  
Sound Mix  
Assistant Director  
Custome Designer  
Make-up  
Producers

**Ana Paula Cardoso**  
**Karen Akerman**  
**Emmanuel Croset**  
**Milena Times**  
**Joana Gatis**  
**Helena d'Araújo**  
**Maya Da-Rin, Leonardo Mecchi,**  
**Juliette Lepoutre**

Co-producers

**Pierre Menahem, Janine Jackowski,**  
**Jonas Dornbach**

Production Company

**Tamanduá Vermelho,**  
**Enquadramento Produções (Brazil)**

Coproduction companies

**Still Moving (France),**  
**Komplizen Film (Germany)**  
**Leonardo Mecchi**

Executive Producer

2019 Brazil/France/Germany  
1:1.85 / 5.1  
98 mins  
In Tukano and Portuguese

## DIRECTOR – MAYA DA-RIN

Maya Da-Rin is a filmmaker and visual artist. She received her bachelor's degree from Le Fresnoy – Studio National des Arts Contemporains in France, holds a master's de-

gree in Cinema and Art History from Sorbonne Nouvelle, and has participated in film workshops at the Cuban School of Cinema. Her work has been shown in film festivals and art institutions throughout the world, including Toronto, DokLeipzig, MoMA and the Vilnius Contemporary Arte Centre. Her 2010 documentary "Terras" (Lands) was shown at over forty film festivals, and her first feature project, "A Febre" (The Fever) was selected for the Cannes Film Festival Cinéfondation residency and for the laboratories La Fabrique des Cinémas du Monde and TorinoFilm-Lab, among others. Premiered at the Locarno Film Festival, "A Febre" received the Best Actor Pardo, the FIPRESCI Prize for best film, as well as the "Environment is quality of life" prize.



## FILMOGRAPHY

E Agora José? (The World Tilts to Here), documentary, 2002, 27'  
Margem (Margin), 2007, documentary, 2006, 54'  
Terras [Lands], 2009, documentary, 2009, 70'  
Version Française [French Version], short film, 2011, 19'  
Horizonte de Eventos [Event Horizon], video-installation, 2012, 45'  
Camuflagem [Camouflage], video-installation, 2013, 6'  
A Febre [The Fever], feature film, 2019, 98'

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

"The initial idea for this project emerged while I was shooting two documentaries in the Amazon region, where I met some indigenous families

who had left their traditional territories deep within the forest to live in the city. I was also confronted with a new generation of urban indigenous people, who carried their traditions with them as they struggled to find their place in Brazilian society. The stories they told me about their experiences revealed the complex and tense relationship between indigenous cultures and Western civilization, which has marked Brazilian history since colonial times. Urged on by these encounters, I began to jot down my first notes for a movie centered on the relationship between two generations, a father and daughter living in Manaus."

**Maya Da-Rin**

## PEOPLE OF THE UPPER RIO NEGRO REGION

The Desana, or Umuko Masá ("people of the universe"), belong to an ample intercultural complex consisting of more than 20 ethnic groups inhabiting the Upper Rio Negro region in the northwest of Brazil's Amazonas state, near the country's border with Colombia. In addition to the Desana, the region is home to the Tukano, Tariano, Karapanã, and Tuyuca peoples, among others. These are patrilineal, exogamous ethnic groups (in other words, members speak their father's language, but marry with members of other groups), and they share many common characteristics, especially in terms of myths, subsistence activities, and material culture.

Although every one of these peoples has their own language, Tukano has become adopted as a lingua franca, which facilitates communication among different ethnic groups. The main actors in "The Fever" are Tukano speakers from the communities of the Upper Rio Negro region. Regis Myrupu (Justino) is Desana; Rosa Peixoto (Vanessa) and Jonathan Sodré (Everton) are Tariano; and Edmildo Vaz Pimentel (André), Anunciata Teles (Marta), and Rodson Vasconcelos (Josué) are Tukano. The film is spoken in Portuguese and Tukano, with the Tukano dialogues conceived and translated by the cast during rehearsal.

## Cosmology

Relations among humans, animals, and the forest form a crucial component of the cosmology of the Upper Rio Negro peoples. In their mythologies and shamanic discourses, animals and other beings that act intentionally are "people" and inhabit worlds that are similar to the human world: they live in communities organized in malocas (group houses or longhouses); they hunt, fish, and farm small plots of land to survive; and they participate in feasts and use ornamentations.



Therefore, what all these different beings have in common is their subjectivities, and as subjects, their way of life is that of human culture. But they also have differences, inasmuch as they have different bodies, customs, and behaviours, and they see things from distinct perspectives. If, in their daily lives, people emphasize their differences from animals, in the world of spirits, which can be accessed through rituals, shamanism and dreams, these perspectives are frequently reversed or inverted. This has important repercussions in daily life, because in societies infused with an extraordinary, metaphysical dimension, all adults must have a certain ability to manage the forces of creation and destruction that surround them in order to survive and prosper, as well as to ensure the wellbeing of their families.

### **First Contacts**

Because it is immersed in dense forest and features numerous waterfalls that make navigation difficult, the Upper Rio Negro region remained relatively protected from the genocide provoked by the European invasion of South America, at least for a certain time.

The first contact between the region's indigenous people and outsiders came in the sixteenth century, when Spanish colonizers coming from present-day Colombia passed through the region. In the eighteenth century, Portuguese incursions in search of slave labour for sugarcane and cotton plantations arrived, followed by nineteenth-century arrivals who came searching for indigenous people to work as rubber extractors.

But it was the arrival of Salesian missionaries at the beginning of the twentieth century that provoked the most significant transformations in the region. The maloca longhouse structures, considered to be "licentious and promiscuous dens," were substituted with single-family houses, and children were removed from their families by force to be educated in boarding schools. Feasts with dances were seen as occasions of "indecent and drunkenness" and pajés (shamans) were seen as "charlatans" who held the people in their thrall. Under the strict regime of boarding schools, children were taught to reject their parents' values and ways of life, encouraged to marry within their own ethnic groups, and forbidden to speak in the languages that gave them multiple, interconnected identities.

### **Migration to the Cities**

In the late 60's, the developmental policies aimed at occupying the Amazon region gave rise to Manaus's Free Economic Zone. Over a million migrants arrived from around Brazil to work in the Industrial Hub's new factories, including many native people who left their traditional homes in the forest in search of salaries, health treatment and education. . But the city had no urban planning nor social projects to better receive the newly arrived populace and consequently urban sprawl expanded into forest areas. If Manaus at the time was home to 200 thousand inhabitants it today numbers over 2 million, and new indigenous migrants arrive every day.

Since then, cities' incursion into the forest, together with food scarcity, deforestation, and the presence of gold miners have all motivated an increasing number of indigenous people

to leave their villages in the Upper Rio Negro region. When they arrive in the cities, however, they have to confront the prejudice of Brazilian society and often have to renounce their customs and traditions. Brazil's 1988 Constitution presented many advances in recognizing a number of different rights of indigenous people, including their right to the land. Since then, many people have returned to self-identifying as indigenous. More recently, identity-based struggles, the validation of cultures, and demands for the right to different policies have gained force, although recent years have also presented many setbacks, which represent a concrete threat to earlier hard-won victories.



## MAYA DA-RIN INTERVIEW

**How did you cast the film? Did you always want to work with non-professional actors in the main roles?**

The original idea was born while I was shooting two documentary films in Amazonia during which I met various Indian families who had left their villages in the forest and moved to the city. I wound up getting close to one of these families and the relationship I established with them sparked for the story. I therefore decided to shoot the movie in Manaus, a city that I had previously visited a couple of times and which had always intrigued me as being an industrial hub located in the middle of the forest. In a way, my starting point is based on

true stories. They interested me mainly because they were stories of characters with whom I could interact in my everyday life. We are all aware of how cinema has the propensity to exoticize indigenous peoples and tends to see them through a romantic and positivistic prism, as remnants of that which western cultures were in the past and not as contemporary complex societies. But the project's initial idea was much different from what it turned out to be. It took six years of work and many trips to Manaus before we were able to begin shooting.

**What was the research process like? The film deals with specific languages and cultures: what material served as a basis for the film, and how did this material become incorporated into the script (or not)?**

The script was written during the time that Miguel Seabra Lopes, my co-author, and I spent together in Manaus. During our research we visited some Indigenous communities on the outskirts of the city while accompanying the daily grind of port employees and nurses working in public health clinics. We experienced situations that were later incorporated into the screenplay, and as well I was able to imagine many others that would not even have occurred to us without these experiences. I think that this is a method that I inherited from my previous work with documentaries, and that translates much of my interest in filmmaking: being close to people and listening to what they have to say. It is very difficult for me to imagine a film while sitting in front of a computer. Soon afterwards, I invited Pedro Cesarino, an anthropologist and writer friend, to work with me on a new version. And during our rehearsals, I also collaborated with the actors, who made important contributions in developing the script.

**How did you cast the film? Did you always want to work with non-professional actors in the main roles?**

Casting was a long process that lasted over a year and counted on the collaboration of a team of young film-makers and actors from Manaus. For me, previous acting experience was not important. I always wanted to work with people who knew the story that we wanted to tell up close. As people of many different ethnicities have migrated to Manaus, I decided not to determine the characters' origin before casting the film. In the process we visited the native communities of Manaus and São Gabriel da Cachoeira, extending invitations to those interested in participating in the film to come talk with us. I interviewed more than 500 people to finally find the actors who play in the film. Régis caught my eye because of his strong presence and the precision of his movements. Rosa in turn had something hidden, like a secret, something I was looking for in Vanessa's role. Both of them had previously acted in minor roles and this was the first time they participated in a more intense filming process.

**What were your preparations for filming? Did you rehearse, or did you prefer to improvise? What was the dynamic between actors and the script while you were filming?**



We had both rehearsals and improvisation. Together with Amanda Gabriel, my partner in preparing the cast, I spent two months rehearsing with the actors before we started shooting. In the beginning, I still did not know how the scenes would develop. I had a few clues, and I wanted to experiment with certain things, but the answers came from the actors. We often began with improvisations after which we slowly constructed the scenes along with them. We could spend days working on one specific scene and we always talked a lot about our impressions. We thus got to know each other better and were able to bring the movie we all wanted to shoot to the surface.



Filming itself was a continuation of this process. We would usually begin rehearsing while shooting and would repeat the same shot over and over again, until exhaustion led the actors into a zone of less control and more surrender. As we repeated the scenes, the intentions both I and the actors had brought into the process became more diluted and opened space for a more active presence. Merely being there, opening a door, drinking coffee, flagging down a bus, talking or sleeping. The repetitions brought with them a more just tone into the film in contrast to the freshness of the first take. I would only discover this however after a few days of actual shooting.

**How did the choice of locations come about? The port district, with its immense shipping containers and cranes, seems especially graphic. But Manaus also has tenuous limits between where the city and the forest meet.**

I was interested in working with relations and contrast between the spaces through which Justino moves. In the forest, for example, Justino can be seen always at the same level of

the vegetation, surround and camouflaged by it. It's a place in which the distinction between figure and backdrop is very tenuous. But then, at the port, we have immense concrete patios filled with containers. Besides the difference in scale between the people and machines, there is a clear and distinct separation between the figures and the backdrop, between the people and their environment. It is a naked space, bare, where Justino seems to be much more vulnerable.

On the other hand, the corridors between the piles of containers, allude to the labyrinthine sensations we experience when walking through the forest. And Justino's movements as he goes his rounds as guard often make me think in those of a hunter prowling about in the forest. I endeavored to use these relations in the images, mise-en-scene and editing. Despite being subtle associations, they accumulate throughout the film and are important in constructing the character.

### **How did relationship between natural and urban spaces in images carry into the work with sound?**

The film has very few songs, with the exception of a Catholic song sung in Tukano during the Mass and the song that accompanies the closing credits. But we aimed to create a musicality in the sound design based on ambient noises and sounds. During our sound research, the sound director Felipe Mussel perceived an approximation between the high timbre of insects in the forest and certain machines in the port district. We began to pay more attention to these sonorities, and during sound editing, we worked to create compositions with noises from the port and from the forest so that we would no longer be able to identify the origin of each sound. These are repetitive sonorities that lead to a hypnotic state of mind resulting in the film's feverish dimension.



**Questions regarding healthcare and medicine are among the film's narrative thread. Justino is stricken with a fever, but he doesn't seem to believe that doctors can cure it. Rosa is a nurse and is going to study medicine. The title is also highly suggestive of this aspect of the film. How do you see the relation between these elements?**

The concept of illness among the Amerindian people is a complex one and often involves not only the sick person's physical body but their relations with other forest beings (animals, spirits and other humans). Treatment should take these aspects into account when diagnosing and finding a cure for their disease. Something that is usually done by the shaman, or kumu, as they are called by the native people living in the region of the Upper Rio Negro; someone able to deal with the multiple alterities acting on the subject. It's a work of translation and mediation among animals, spirits and humans. This is why the shamans are often referred to as being diplomats.

In the Tukano language, there is no word for nature nor is there any distinction between humanity and the environment. And not unlike humans, all creatures that act intentionally are considered as being "people". Or, in other words, they are individuals and not objects. This totally changes the way relationships are carried out in society. A very different premise from our own which has always denied or been suspicious of the humanity of others. Not unlike when Europeans first arrived in the Americas and Africa saying that indigenous and black people were not possessed of a soul in order to take them as slaves, or as seen in the raising of livestock in cruel conditions to later be slaughtered on a large scale, or even when stripping the forests of their natural resources while believing we are acting in benefit of our species without taking all the other species living there into consideration.



I believe our society today is ill because it is unable to relate to otherness nor support differences. We are the only species that exterminates itself, something that has gone on for centuries of colonization and continues still today when we close our eyes to the hardships suffered by immigrants and refugees or when acting with indifference to global warming and deforestation.

**The film ends with a song. Where does this song come from, and who sings it? Was this the out-come you planned from the beginning?**

The song at the end of the film was created by Rosa, the actress who plays Vanessa. It is part of a Tukano's musical tradition called Ahãbeki or Hãde Hãde, consisting of melodic improvisations that women sing while working or carrying out rituals. The words are always improvised, but it follows a consolidated metrics taught by older women to younger women. In one of our rehearsals, we asked the actresses if any of them would like to sing a Hãde Hãde, and Rosa brought this one. Even though she moved to Manaus when she was still a child, she knows the melodies that her mother sang. At that moment, though, we still didn't know that the film would end in that way. The idea came to us during the editing process with Karen Akerman.

**Did any particular films inspire you?**

Today in Brazil, there is a strong tradition of films made by indigenous filmmakers. These were a major reference point for me, including films like "Tatakox" (2007) and "Xupapoyñãg" (2012) by Isael and Suely Maxacali. These are films that establish a very free relationship in terms of temporality and in constructing narratives. Some of these films remind me of early years of cinema, when narrative conventions had not yet been so firmly set and filmmakers had much more freedom to work.

In addition, certain other films made by non-indigenous directors were important for developing "The Fever." The Exiles [USA, 1961] is a film in which Kent Mackenzie accompanies a group of native migrants who had recently arrived on the urban periphery of Los Angeles. It's a beautifully black and white film with very interesting acting based on improvisation. The Brazilian "Iracema, uma transamazônica" [Iracema, 1975], by Orlando Sena and Jorge Bodanzky, is a classic that I watched several times while preparing "The Fever." And The Leopard Man [USA, 1943] is a film that, back in the 1940s, already presented a scathing critique of prejudice against indigenous people, in addition to having Jacques Tourneurs' genius work in constructing suspense and atmosphere.



## RÉGIS MYRUPU

Member of the indigenous Desana people, Regis Myrupu was born in Pari-Cachoeira - a community of native peoples belonging to twenty-three different ethnic groups in the northwestern Amazon, near Brazil's border with Colombia. His name, Myrupu, means "the blowing wind." Like his grandfather and father before him, he learned particular elements of the Desana culture and became a spiritual leader, or shaman. In 1995, when he was 15 years old, he and his family moved to the town of Barcelos, and in 2002, he settled at the São João do Tupé community near Manaus, the largest city in the Brazilian Amazon. Since 2014, he coordinated the Herisãrã Cultural Forest project where, based on his ancestral knowledge, he works to create sustainable exchanges between responsible tourism and indigenous culture. "The Fever" is his first film.

## ROSA PEIXOTO

Rosa Peixoto belongs to the Tariano people, part of the Upper Rio Negro inter-cultural system. She was born in 1988 in Iauaretê, the largest population centre on indigenous land in the Upper Rio Negro region of Amazonas state. When she was 14, she and her family moved to Manaus, and at 15, she began to act with the Dyroá Bayá arts group, a theatre, music, and dance collective dedicated to showcasing indigenous culture, to which her family belongs. At 21, she had her first leading role in the short-length film "Uayná – Lágrimas de veneno" ("Uayaná – Poison Tears," Júnior Rodrigues, 2010). In 2018, she moved to São Paulo, where the Dyroá Bayá group continues their work of preserving and disseminating indigenous cultures.

