

TABU

a film by Miguel Gomes

World Premiere, Berlin Film Festival 2012

WINNER, ALFRED BAUER PRIZE for INNOVATION
WINNER, FIPRESCI INTERNATIONAL CRITICS' PRIZE



Portugal / 118 min. / Black and White

Certificate: 15

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Tabu

Director	Miguel Gomes
Script	Miguel Gomes and Mariana Ricardo
Cinematographer	Rui Poças (AIP)
Editors	Telmo Churro, Miguel Gomes
Sound	Vasco Pimentel
1st Assistant Director	Bruno Lourenço
Continuity	Telmo Churro
Artistic Consultant B&W	Silke Fischer
Art Director	Bruno Duarte
Costumes	Silvia Grabowski
Hair & Make-up	Araceli Fuente and Donna Meirelles
Sound Editors	Miguel Martins and António Lopes
Mixing	Miguel Martins
Production manager	Joaquim Carvalho
Producers	Luís Urbano and Sandro Aguilar
Co-producers	Janine Jackowski, Jonas Dornbach, Maren Ade, Fabiano Gullane, Caio Gullane, Debora Ivanov, Gabriel Lacerda, Thomas Ordonneau
Associate producer	Alexander Bohr, ZDF/ARTE In co-operation with Georg Steinert, ARTE
Executive producer	Luís Urbano
A production of	O Som e a Fúria, Komplizen Film, Gullane, Shellac Sud
With the support of	ICA, IP, ANCINE – Agência Nacional para o Cinema (Brazil) Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein (Germany)
With the participation of	CNC (France)
Produced with support of	Ibermedia
Developed with	the MEDIA Programme of the European Community
and participation of	ZDF/ARTE and RTP

PORTUGAL 2012 - BLACK AND WHITE - 35mm -110 MINUTES - DOLBY SR SRD – 1:1.37 - In Portuguese with English subtitles

Music:	<i>Variações pindéricas sobre a insensatez</i> Joana Sá Played by Joana Sá
	<i>Cosí come viene</i> Vito Pallavicini & Ezio Leoni Performed by Conjunto de Oliveira Muge
	<i>Tú serás mi baby</i> Phil Spector, Ellie Greenwich & Jeff Barry Performed by Les Surfs
	<i>Baby I Love You</i> Phil Spector, Ellie Greenwich & Jeff Barry Performed by The Ramones
	<i>Lonely Wine</i> Roy Wells Performed by Mickey Gilley

CAST

Pilar

Aurora (Old)

Aurora (Young)

Gian Luca Ventura (Old)

Gian Luca Ventura (Young)

Santa

Aurora's husband

Mário

Painter

TERESA MADRUGA

LAURA SOVERAL

ANA MOREIRA

HENRIQUE ESPÍRITO SANTO

CARLOTO COTTA

ISABEL CARDOSO

IVO MÜLLER

MANUEL MESQUITA

CÁNDIDO MANUEL

SYNOPSIS

Pilar spends her first years of retirement trying to straighten up the world and dealing with other people's guilt, an increasingly frustrating task these days. She takes part in peace vigils, collaborates with Catholic charities, wants to lodge young Polish girls coming to Lisbon on a Taizé ecumenical meeting and constantly hangs up and takes down an ugly painting made by a friend so as not to offend his feelings should it not be in view when he comes to visit...

She is mostly troubled by her neighbour Aurora, a temperamental and eccentric octogenarian who escapes to the casino whenever she has any money on her. She talks constantly about her daughter who seems to not want to see her, has hangovers from anti-depressants and suspects her Cape Verdean maid Santa is wickedly practising voodoo against her.

We know little of Santa, who is economical with her words, follows orders and thinks that everyone should mind their own business. She goes to adult literacy classes and practices at night by reading a young reader's edition of Robinson Crusoe.

Before dying, Aurora will make a mysterious request which Pilar and Santa combine efforts to accomplish. She wants to meet a man, Gian Luca Ventura, someone nobody knew existed until then. Pilar and Santa will find that he does exist but are informed he is no longer sane. Ventura has a secret pact with Aurora and a story to tell; a story that occurred fifty years ago, shortly before the beginning of the Portuguese colonial war. It starts like this: "Aurora had a farm in Africa at the foothills of Mount Tabu..."

Further information at www.newwavefilms.co.uk



Miguel Gomes was born in Lisbon in 1972. He studied at the Lisbon Film and Theatre School and between 1996 and 2000 worked as a film critic in Portugal. He directed several short films that went on to win awards in Oberhausen, Belfort and Vila do Conde. His films were screened in Locarno, Rotterdam, Buenos Aires and Vienna. *The Face You Deserve* (2004) was his first feature film. In 2008, he presented *Our Beloved Month of August* in the Directors' Fortnight. The film was subsequently selected in more than forty international festivals where it won over a dozen prizes. The Viennale (Austria, 2008), Bafici (Argentina, 2009), and the Centro de Artes e Imaxes da Corunha (Spain, 2009) have organized retrospectives of his work.

Tabu is his latest film, which premiered in Berlin in February 2012, where it won the Alfred Bauer Prize for Innovation as well as the Fipresci International Critics' Prize.

FILMOGRAPHY

- 2012 **TABU**
Official Selection, Berlinale 2012
Winner, Alfred Bauer Prize for Innovation
Winner, Fipresci International Critics' Prize
- 2008 **AQUELE QUERIDO MÊS DE AGOSTO (OUR BELOVED MONTH OF AUGUST)**
Official Selection, Quinzaine des Realisateurs
- 2006 **CANTICO DE CRIATURAS (CANTICLE OF ALL CREATURES)** - short
- 2004 **A CARA QUE MERECE (THE FACE YOU DESERVE)**
- 2002 **KALKITOS** - short
TRINTA E UM (31 MEANS TROUBLES) - short
- 2000 **INVENTÁRIO DE NATAL (A CHRISTMAS INVENTORY)** - short
- 1999 **ENTRETANTO (MEANWHILE)** – short



FAST QUESTIONS BY MAREN ADE AND ULRICH KÖHLER, SEMI-QUICK ANSWERS BY MIGUEL GOMES

What was the starting point of the film?

The fact that there is someone in my family who has several points in common with Pilar's character. She has always lived on her own, she is a practicing Catholic, loves to go to the movies (she's the one who got me into watching films when I was a kid) and keeps jumping from one humanitarian activity to the next. She told me the story of her relationship with a senile and somewhat paranoid neighbour who would often take refuge at her place and accuse the African maid of locking her up in her room at night and of further ill-treatment which was never proven. I was interested in these three lonely sixty or eighty-year-old female characters with distinguishing temperaments and peculiarities, who deep down are fairly ordinary characters we might run into in everyday life, characters we don't usually meet in films.

How did the idea of the silent second part come up?

I'm not even sure the second part of the film is technically a silent film. Dialogue is suppressed, but there is a narrative voice-over that recounts the sequence of events taking place in this segment of the film. And there are the letters Ventura and Aurora exchange. Someone is telling a story for somebody else who is listening to it. Between Ventura's memory and Pilar's and Santa's visualization of his narrative there is no place for dialogue, as if the concrete words exchanged between characters got lost in time. It was also from this perspective that I wanted to address the aesthetics of silent film (or even of Super 8, a domestic and more recent variety of primitive and silent film). I didn't want to make a modern pastiche of silent film, but rather find another way of getting through to some of its essence and beauty. Well, at least try to.

Was it a search for a cinema that doesn't exist anymore?

Tabu is a film about the passage of time, about things that disappear and can only exist as memory, phantasmagoria, imagery – or as cinema, which summons and congregates all that. There is a massive ellipsis in the film, we go back fifty years. We go from the time of old age to youth, from the time of hangover and guilt to the time of excesses, from a post-colonial society to the time of colonialism. It's a film about things that are extinguished: a person who dies, an extinguished society, a time that can only exist in the memory of those who lived it. We also wanted to connect this to an extinct cinema. We chose to shoot the film in black and white, which is also on the verge of extinction – 35mm for the contemporary section, 16mm for the African section. I'm sometimes asked why the first part isn't in colour, according to the (somewhat absurd) convention that the past is in black and white and the present in colour. If the second part of the film fits what is conventionally known as a "period piece", I'm not sure the first part isn't as much of a "period piece".

How important was the work of Murnau for the film? What other films inspired you?

Murnau's work is important to everyone, although some are more aware of it than others. Many films inspire me – as much as stories told by relatives, in this case – but I have a weak memory and films get all mixed up in my head. What sticks with me is the sensation of films, which is completely a part of me, but the cinema I make is not one of explicit quotes. Most of all, I have a strong connection with classical American cinema.

How did you work with the actors?

For the first section, we rehearsed the scenes written in the script quite a bit. For the second part we didn't rehearse anything and threw away the script (although we followed the guidelines of what we had written). I asked Ana Moreira to learn how to use a rifle and Carloto Cotta to practice playing the drums. In Africa, we formed a four-element group within the crew, named the Central Committee (me, the scriptwriter, the script supervisor/ editor and the assistant director). The Central Committee's job was to invent, rewrite and eliminate scenes or ideas of scenes we were to shoot the following days. During the shooting we would improvise with the actors, who knew little of what would go on in the scenes, although

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they had a general picture of the whole story. In some scenes we recorded synchronous sound and the actors would pretend to be speaking, while saying whatever they pleased (*Tabu* will be a very interesting film for the Portuguese deaf-mute audience who can read lips...). In other scenes the actors were actually speaking and later we eliminated and replaced the synchronous sound.

How did you work with the black and white?

We did some preparatory work, trying to understand the shades of grey each colour and gradation of colour would give. Nothing very scientific, but we would photograph sets, wardrobe, make-up tests, props etc. in black and white. I used a 7D digital camera in black and white mode to decide where to place the movie camera. When there is no colour, both composition and the way light enters and is diffused in the frame become more relevant. But at some point we all have eyes to see, so we put science aside.

What role do the colonial times have in present-day Lisbon?

My dear friends, that is a question of a sociological nature that would demand a long answer I don't feel ready to give. War between Portugal and the former colonies (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde) began in the first half of the Sixties and ended only in 1974, with those countries' proclamation of independence and the fall of the fascist regime with the "The Carnation Revolution" of 25 April. That is to say it's still very close in the history of the country. Thousands of returnees came back to Portugal at that time. My mother, for example, was born in Angola and came to Lisbon in the Sixties to study.

As I've said, more than articulating the colonial issue between the two sections of the film, I wanted to have a more abstract component, going from a vague sense of loss and guilt to a time of excess, brutality and folly (sentimental, social and political folly), but I wanted the melancholy of the first part to contaminate the euphoria of the second. The images and characters' actions in "Paradise" (something it never was, for those who missed the irony) already come from a "Paradise Lost".

Where exactly in Mozambique is Mount Tabu?

There is no Mount Tabu in Mozambique, don't believe everything you see in the movies! The film was shot in the north of the Zambezia province, near the border with Malawi. It is a mountain region dominated by the cultivation of tea. In the film, it's not even supposed to be Mozambique, it's an unnamed former Portuguese colony, an indeterminate historical territory reinvented for a film called *Tabu*.



THE CAST

TERESA MADRUGA

Teresa Madruga was born in the Portuguese archipelago of the Azores in 1953.

She began acting in theatre in 1976. Her film work for directors such as Manoel de Oliveira, João César Monteiro, João Canijo, João Pedro Rodrigues, João Botelho and Fernando Lopes stands out in a filmography of over thirty titles.

Her part in Alain Tanner's *La Ville Blanche (In the White City, 1983)* brought her international recognition and further work in International productions. In 1995 she acted alongside Marcello Mastroianni in Roberto Faenza's *Afirma Pereira (According to Pereira)*.

She was given prizes several times for her roles in films and on stage. She has also done the voices in more than eighty cartoons.

LAURA SOVERAL

Laura Soveral was born in Angola in 1933.

She was a kindergarten teacher in the Portuguese former colony but started acting when she settled in Lisbon. While studying German Philology at Lisbon University she becomes interested in theatre. She debuted in the play *Deseja-se Mulher (Women Wanted)* by Almada Negreiros (1963), and then enrolled in the National Theatre Conservatory. After several roles for television, she was awarded in 1968 the Best Cinema Actress award by National Office of Culture. Both a theatre and cinema actress, she has featured in films by Manoel de Oliveira, João Botelho, and Fernando Lopes among others. She still acts for television, regularly appearing in soap operas.

ANA MOREIRA

Ana Moreira was born in Lisbon in 1980.

She was 17 when she debuted as an actress in the short film *Primavera (Spring)* by João Tuna. One year later she played the main role in *Os Mutantes* by Teresa Villaverde, for which she won the Best Actress awards at the Bastia and Taormina Film Festivals. Teresa Villaverde would direct her again in *Água e Sal (Water and Salt, 2001)* and *Transe (Trance, 2006)*. She appeared in films by Raquel Freire, José Nascimento, José Fonseca e Costa, Margarida Gil, Jorge Cramez and João Botelho, among others. In 2006, she won the Best Actress award at the Portuguese Golden Globes for her role in *Adriana* by Margarida Gil.

CARLOTO COTTA

Carloto Cotta was born in Portugal in 1984.

After studying theatre in high school, he appeared in over thirty films and soap operas, working among others with João Pedro Rodrigues, Manuel Mozos, Jorge Cramez and Miguel Gomes who first directed him in *The Face you Deserve (A Cara Que Mereces)*. He is the lead in the Palme winner short *Arena (2009)* by João Salaviza, and plays a part in the multi-award winning *Mistérios de Lisboa (Mysteries of Lisbon)* by Raúl Ruiz (distributed by New Wave Films in the UK). He has been a member of the band "Aves Migratórias" for the past 8 years.

HENRIQUE ESPÍRITO SANTO

Henrique Espírito Santo was born in Portugal in 1931.

He started as a film society manager and is the author of several cinema related articles published between 1954 and 1963 in the Portuguese magazines *Visor*, *Imagem*, *Actualidades*, *Seara Nov*, as well as in several newspapers.

He became a film, documentary, advertising and TV producer in 1967 and has started appearing in films since. He has worked as production manager for João César Monteiro, José Fonseca e Costa, Alberto Seixas Santos and Manoel de Oliveira. He produced *Cerromaior* by Luís Filipe Rocha (1980), one of the first post-revolution films to explore social issues in Portugal. In 1976 he created the production company *Prole Filme*. Beside teaching production, he has also developed a workshop for children, "How To Make a Movie" (1998), which he has been teaching all over the country ever since.

ISABEL CARDOSO

Isabel Cardoso was born in São Tomé in 1949.

She is a cook for a day nursery. Although not a professional actress, she appeared in two films by Pedro Costa, *Juventude Em Marcha (Colossal Youth, 2006)* and *A Caça Ao Coelho Com Pau (The Rabbit Hunters, Costa's short film included in the 2007 film Memories)* before getting a role in *Tabu*.

IVO MÜLLER

Ivo Müller was born in Brazil in 1977.

In 1994, thanks to a scholarship from the American Field Service, he went to study law in the United States. During that stay, he got into amateur theatre. He then worked as an intern in banks and law offices, and wrote several articles about cinema for the *Guia Floripa* website while continuing his theatre work. He joined the theatre company *Grupo Tapa* (of which he's still a member) as an understudy in 2003. He won the APCA (São Paulo Association of Art Critics) 2010 Best Play award for *Doze Homens E Uma Sentença (12 Angry Men)* directed by Eduardo Tolentino de Araújo. He is the author of the theatre monologue *Cartas A Um Jovem Poeta (Letters to a Young Poet)* based on texts by Rainer Maria Rilke. *Tabu* is his first role in a feature film.

MANUEL MESQUITA

Manuel Mesquita was born in Lisbon in 1977.

He studied Anthropology, but has worked in several cinema related activities.

He has composed music for films and played minor roles. He is a regular cast member in films by João Nicolau who gave him his first lead role in *A Espada e a Rosa (The Sword and the Rose)*. A regular collaborator with the production company *O Som e a Fúria*, he also appears in Sandro Aguilar's *A Zona (Uprise, 2009)*. He works in production, direction and editing. He is also part of several Portuguese music bands, including "München" and "Norman", with Norberto and João Lobo.

