

OSTRICH BOY

MARCHÉ DU FILM
FESTIVAL DE CANNES



PITCH DECK



ABOUT

GENRE

Fantasy | Magical Realism | Drama

LENGTH

90 mins

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

4k | 5.1

LOGLINE

Marked by a rare facial condition called "Ostrich Syndrome", a lonely teen seeks acceptance by joining a racewalking group.

SYNOPSIS

Oskar is a teenager who suffers from Ostrich Syndrome, a mysterious and extremely rare condition where one's face and limbs resemble that of an ostrich. After growing up in hiding because of his unique appearance, Oskar and his single mother, Teresa, move to the small town of Gillingham where he attends public school for the first time. Teresa mistakenly thinks he will find sanctuary amongst the kindness of small town folk, but unfortunately Oskar's troubles worsen as the sheltered residents of Gillingham have a hard time accepting his abnormality. To cope with being ostracized, Oskar hides in baggy clothes and finds peace listening to a motivational tape on his Walkman.

On Oskar's second day of school, after having eggs thrown at him by fellow classmates, he attempts to fly under the radar by eating his lunch in a bathroom stall. While sitting on the toilet and pecking away at a sandwich, a mysterious note with instructions reading "StArDuSt 9pm" slips through the door cracks. The invitation details are accompanied by a childlike, hand-drawn map, adding a frightening level of intrigue that only someone with nothing to lose would explore.

After a particularly harsh day at school, Oskar decides to venture into the unknown and acquaint himself with the enigma of StArDuSt, an abandoned roller skating rink turned racewalking training facility. It's here where he meets some eccentric racewalkers, including the owner, Jim. Not only is Jim Gillingham High's hallway monitor ("No running in the halls!"), but he also happens to be a washed-up racewalking legend.

Jim teaches Oskar the art of racewalking and the mentorship evolves into a surrogate father-son relationship. Eventually, he manages to coax Oskar into participating in an important upcoming race to boost his confidence. Now an official racewalker, Oskar begins to train and finds comfort under Jim's wing until accidentally uncovering Jim has been exploiting him as a freak attraction in order to sell race tickets.

Feeling betrayed and alone, Oskar isolates himself until one night, in a dream-like state, he encounters a magical creature who inspires him to do something otherworldly that will challenge the pecking order of human aesthetics.

CHARACTERS

OSKAR is a wannabe wallflower who's striking appearance makes it impossible for him to be one. His formula for interacting with the world around him is to be as invisible as possible to avoid scrutiny from his peers. To do this, Oskar has developed a daily routine to ensure the highest level of invisibility possible: his day starts by arriving at school a half hour early and his day ends by leaving last class a half hour late. Eating lunch in a bathroom stall everyday is another tactic he's adopted that has reduced his visibility ratio but has increased the rate of unfortunate scenarios for his olfactory senses. A small price to pay.

With his inability to handle the most basic of social situations comes a beautiful naivety that makes Oskar a trusting and loyal individual to those who take a kind interest in him. His insecurities battle his desire to fulfill all basic friendship duties: hanging out in well lit areas, doing activities in public, and even taking selfies together... the most horrific of all. And as no amount of Instagram filters can fix his appearance, Oskar's awkward build lends itself well to racewalking physics and it is with this sport that he develops the confidence he needs to fly in the face of adversity.

OSTRICH SYNDROME Oskar may be a typical angsty teen but instead of the usual acne prone skin that comes along with that, he has a rare condition known to medical professionals as "Ostrich Syndrome". Not much is known about the defect other than that it's a full-bodied deformity resembling the flightless African bird: a beak-like nose and limbs for days with the occasional feather sprouting from a hair follicle or two. Affecting 0.0000001% of the population, little has been done to find a cure and acceptance is the only remedy.



PROSTHETIC TEST



CHARACTERS



JIM A former racewalking champion, Jim spends his days as Gillingham High's volunteer hallway monitor. Passionate about the art of walking, Jim takes pride in making sure there's, "No running in the halls!" In contrast to this wholesome task, Jim's after school activities showcase a dirty, big talking entrepreneur wannabe who operates a racewalking training facility along with the biggest racewalking event in town known as the Racewalking United Nationale (R.U.N.). Always trying to make a quick buck, Jim sees dollar signs in Oskar's long legged stride and his pursuit of quick fortune comes to overshadow their friendship that has unexpectedly



TERESA Although she's just one individual, the love Teresa has for Oskar is equal to the love of one hundred mothers combined. A retired beauty queen, she led an easy life in her pretty bubble up until it popped when she birthed her ugly duckling son. A rude awakening for how cruel people can be, Teresa has developed little trust in the kindness of others and has created a sheltered life for Oskar that has been socially crippling. Even though she has the best of intentions, Oskar resents Teresa and tends to blame her for all his problems like a typical angsty teen.

BULLIES In the quaint town of Gillingham, the close-knit community grapples with accepting Oskar's unique appearance, and bullying runs rampant among its sheltered residents. They are everyday individuals spanning different ages, yet their collective presence serves as a relentless force of torment. Their incessant targeting of our protagonist becomes the catalyst that forces him to confront his own identity and find the courage to challenge society's rigid standards of human aesthetics.



CHARACTERS THE SPEEDWALKERS



RUTH By Ruth's standards, she is the sexiest woman alive. Taking 'self love' to the extreme, she runs her own fan club and has her own name tattooed across her chest. Using speedwalking as an excuse to be around sweaty men, she has a lot to prove since she's an 82 year old woman but her technique mirrors her young, fiery spirit. Loving men of all shapes and sizes, she is the only woman to ever look Oskar directly in the eyes (other than his Mom) and this terrifies him.



BEEF Beef believes he can do anything and so can you. Per Beef, everybody needs an unsolicited motivational speech and although he has good intentions, his intimidating size and dangerous appearance make them feel like military drills. Despite this desire to inspire, the right trigger can cause a sharp personality shift in Beef that sucks him into a darker side within milliseconds. It's the reason he makes the other racewalkers nervous, however, Ruth still scares Oskar more.



NINJA CAT To Ninja Cat, when one racewalks, one moves closer to the Heavens and the meaning of life. She is a mute athlete who has devoted her whole being to the 'art of walk' and refuses to speak in order to preserve oxygen for the next racing event. Her focus makes her unapproachable and withdrawn but Oskar finds relief in her presence knowing Ninja Cat has zero interest in him or the way he looks.



LARS is the personification of the racewalking page on Wikipedia. He knows every technique written from petroglyphs to ancient scrolls. Lars believes that what was once considered to be a human's casual walking pace is what is known today as "racewalking" (the politically correct term) and that people have just become lazy over thousands of years. His endless knowledge of the sport makes him a formidable foe on the track. Lars is keen to teach Oskar the ins and outs and pop his racewalking cherry.



SHANIA and the TWAINS Shania had always been a Momma's girl, so when her mom died in a tragic racewalking accident she vowed to honor her name by becoming the fastest racewalker in Gillingham. Her two fans (aka the Twains) believe Shania is everything and are determined to help. They follow Shania everywhere acting like personal hype-ladies and often speaking in unison. Their matching outfits and choreographed mannerisms are evocative of a mid 90's boy band.

THE WORLD

THE TOWN

Gillingham is the smallest town in the Canadian Prairies. As one of the oldest rural towns in the country, it has remained unaffected by major technological advancements. The community, jam packed with seniors, moves at a slow pace and residents live sheltered from the complexities of the outside world. Accustomed to familiarity, they harbor a discomfort towards outsiders, particularly those whose appearance diverges from their own, fostering an atmosphere of unease and hesitancy towards acceptance.



THE WORLD



SPEEDWALKING

Speedwalking (more properly referred to as racewalking) is a long-distance discipline within the sport of athletics. Although a foot race, it is different from running in that one foot must appear to be in contact with the ground at all times.

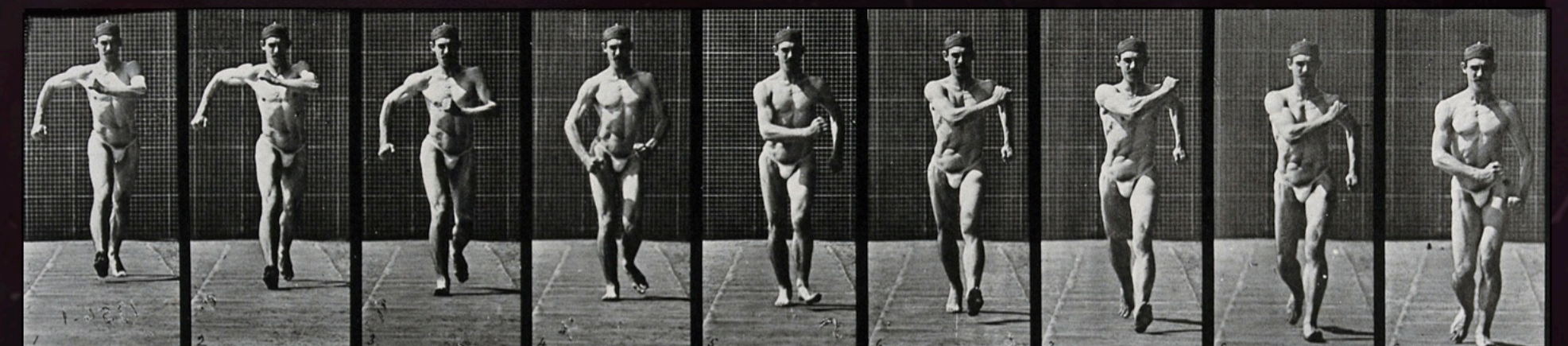
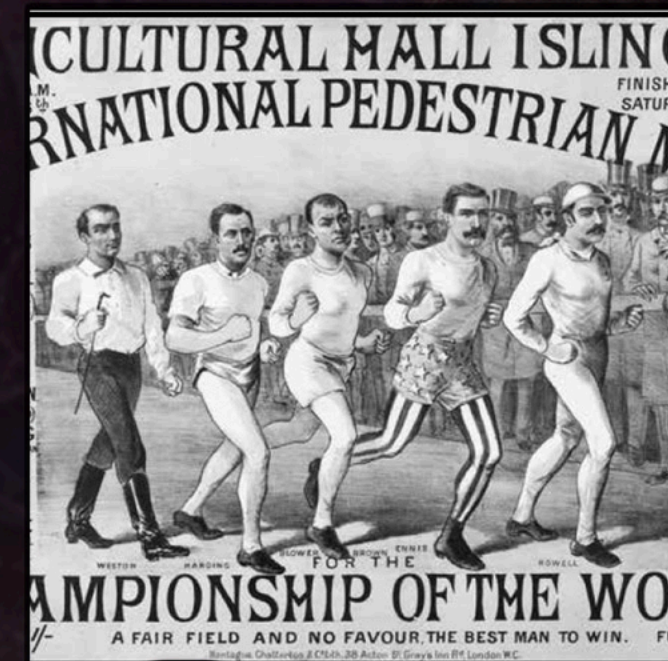
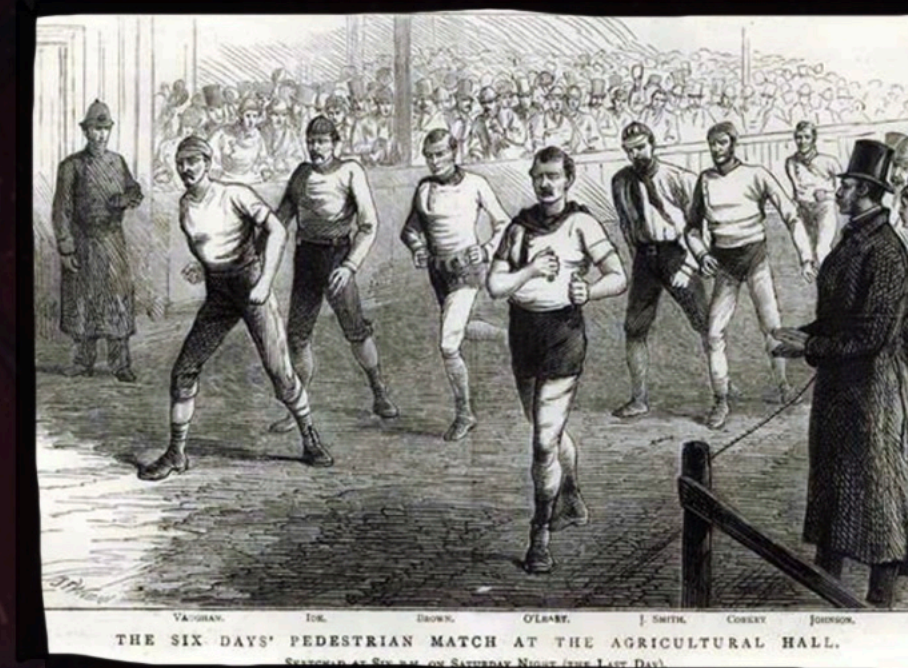
The sport emerged in the late 18th century from a British culture of long-distance competitive walking known as 'pedestrianism', which had developed as a popular working class pastime and a venue for wagering.

There are only two rules that govern the sport. The first dictates that the athlete's back toe cannot leave the ground until the heel of the front foot has touched. Violation of this rule is known as loss of contact. The second rule requires that the supporting leg must straighten from the point of contact with the ground and remain straightened until the body passes directly over it. These rules are evaluated by judges and the unaided human eye.

R.U.N

The Racewalking United Nationale (R.U.N.) is an important racewalking competition that happens once a year in Gillingham. It's a magical time as blue collars, suits and crime lords all come together to bet on their favorite racewalkers in hopes of making a quick, non-taxable dollar.

R.U.N. is organized by Jim, who operates unlicensed gambling activities in the shadows while simultaneously selling it as a wholesome community affair. Unfortunately, ticket sales have plummeted to unprecedented lows, compelling Jim to urgently seek avenues that will boost revenue in order to keep his cherished event and covert gambling endeavors alive.



THE WORLD



StArDuSt (THE SPEEDWALKING ARENA)

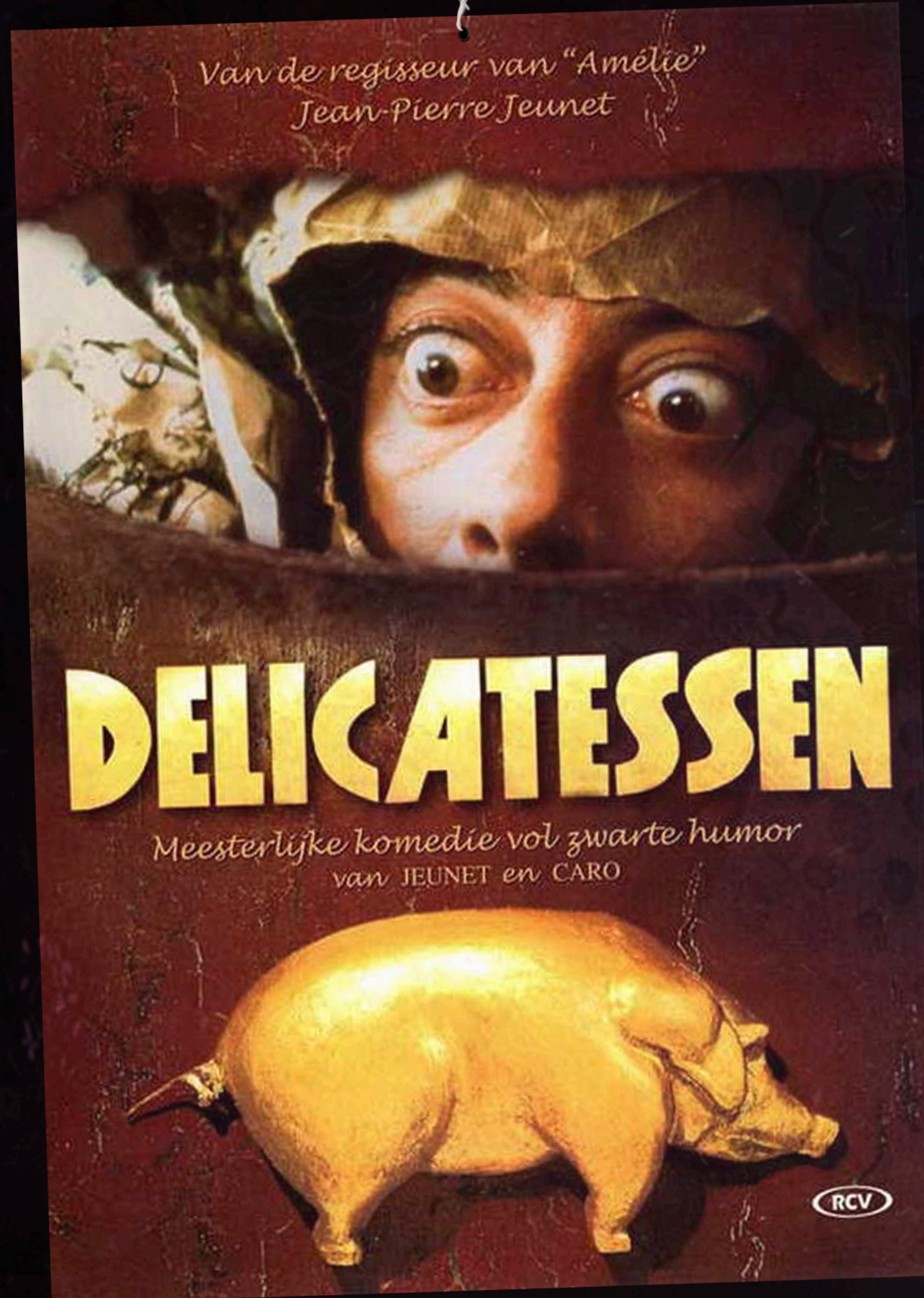
StArDuSt is an abandoned roller skating rink that was once big in the early 90's but shut down after going bankrupt as Gillingham's residents lacked interest in shoes with wheels. It is now run by Jim and serves as a popular underground destination for racewalkers and gamblers. Racers walk laps around a make-do track built on top of the deteriorating rink. Many suffer severe injuries including broken legs, head trauma, and cardiac arrest but even though there is a high rate of injury, StArDuSt draws the most exceptional racewalkers to compete. Jim is instrumental in this, as he sells his recruits on the all-Canadian racewalking dream.



THE WORLD



SHOW CROSS



Visual Tone & Style

ROCKY



Story Structure, Athletic Backdrop &
Man vs. Self Inner Conflict

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The idea for *Ostrich Boy* came about many years ago during my childhood in Venezuela. I used to play soccer almost every day with the other kids in my neighborhood and one of the fun things we would do was come up with fictional, legendary characters and pretend to be them as we played. "The Goalkeeper Ostrich" or "El Portero Avestruz" (in Spanish) was one of the characters that stuck with me throughout the years. He was a very lanky boy with a strange ostrich look that, according to us, was the best goalkeeper in the world. I always saw him as a mysterious, shy person who came from an exotic place.

It wasn't until I moved to North America that I began to think about this legendary Ostrich Boy more deeply. Experiencing certain aspects of immigrant life for the first time, I came to relate to him and understand that his mystery and shyness stemmed from a place of being different. The more I thought about him, the more details started to develop: he didn't have any friends, he talked differently, and he probably didn't feel good about his Ostrich Boy nickname.

Aside from a strong desire to tell the tale of this unique character, *Ostrich Boy* provides a good opportunity to highlight the relevant topics of discrimination and self-loathing that will follow our protagonist as he struggles to cope with his rare condition in a sheltered town that has a hard time accepting his differences. I hope to leave the audience with a message about the power of self-love and acceptance.

When it comes to the stylistic choices of the film, I am a big lover of enchanting images that are well crafted and executed properly. Visually speaking, my favorite films tend to involve unconventional camera angles and striking color palettes. For reference, one of my favorite cinematographers is Dharius Khondji (*Delicatessen*, *Se7en*) for his mastery of contrasting light and shadow as a means of evoking particular moods. Additionally, as a VFX artist that has spent over a decade crafting digital sets and characters, I tend to pay close attention to the production design and visual effects. I believe when these elements are executed properly, the cinematic value increases and the viewer experience is more immersive.

Team-wise, I thoroughly enjoy all stages of the filmmaking process and consider it to be the best medium to collaborate with and learn from talented creatives. Working alongside my creative partner, Holly Pavlik, has been a rewarding experience, unraveling the enigma of the mysterious boy from my childhood and delving into his world and story. Our makeup artist, Chelsea Delfino, has made an incredible contribution to the character's appearance as well. We have assembled a strong team of passionate individuals who are motivated to bring this tale to life and I am beyond excited for the journey ahead.

- Ricardo Bonisoli, Director

MOODBOARD



THE TEAM



Ricardo Bonisoli | Director/Producer

Ricardo is a Venezuelan/Canadian Filmmaker and Visual Effects Artist with over 15 years experience working at prominent studios such as Industrial Light & Magic, Digital Domain, and Apple. His VFX credits include the major titles *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, and *Aquaman* to name a few.

Ricardo's recent short film, *The Seahorse Trainer*, won 13 awards during its festival run and its jury award at SIFF qualified the project for the 2020 Oscars. In recent years, Ricardo has directed music videos for The Voice UK finalist Lauren Bannon, one of which recently picked up a Telly Award win for Best Music Video.

Currently, Ricardo works as a VFX/Filmmaker expert for Apple's Pro Workflow team, leading explorations in Virtual Production, Photogrammetry and LiDAR and has worked with high-profile clients like The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and renowned artist Tom Sachs.



Holly Pavlik | Writer/Producer/Editor

Holly Pavlik is a Canadian Independent Filmmaker and Editor. Most notably, she co-produced and edited *The Seahorse Trainer* which earned 13 wins and 11 nominations during its festival run and picked up a jury award at SIFF making it an Academy Award qualifier in 2020.

Holly also has 15 years of post production experience in live-action and animation. Her Editor credits have earned her a Leo Award win and two Canadian Cinema Editor award nominations. With additional experience on the VFX side of post, VFX Editor credits include prestigious titles such as *Love, Death and Robots*, *Men in Black: International*, *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*, and most recently she served as a VFX Editor on *Loki S2* at Marvel Studios in Los Angeles.



Glen Morgan | Executive Producer

Glen Morgan is a renowned American screenwriter, producer, and director. He first gained widespread recognition as a writer and producer on the iconic television series *The X-Files*.

In addition to his writing and directing accomplishments, Glen Morgan has made a significant mark as a producer. He has produced numerous episodes of *The X-Files* and *Millennium*, playing a key role in shaping the tone and direction of both series. Morgan also produced *The Twilight Zone* reboot with Jordan Peele and served as an executive producer on the sci-fi series *Intruders* and the *Final Destination* franchise. His work behind the scenes demonstrates his versatility and ability to bring high-quality, suspenseful, and emotionally resonant stories to life.

THE TEAM



Rhys Claringbull | VFX Supervisor

Rhys is a CG supervisor whose credits include feature films such as *Elysium*, *Jurassic World*, and *Star Wars: Rogue One*. Most recently, he served as Associate VFX Supervisor on *The Creator*, which was in the running for Best VFX at the 2024 Academy Awards. Rhys also served as VFX Supervisor at Industrial Light and Magic on Marvel Studios' *The Marvels*.

Apart from successes in the blockbuster world, Rhys has a strong affinity for independent film. In 2019, he oversaw the on-set VFX for the Oscar qualified short film *The Seahorse Trainer*, which picked up a Leo Award win for its VFX work and won the Spark FX Rising Star in VFX Award.



Dan Cantrell | Composer

Dan Cantrell is an Emmy award winning composer known for his innovative and evocative film and theatre scoring approach, as well as his virtuosic playing abilities on the accordion, piano and musical saw. Dan's work has been featured in the cult classic horror film *It Follows*, and in 2019 he picked up a Leo Award win for Best Musical Score in a Short Drama for *The Seahorse Trainer*.

In recent years, Dan has performed and recorded with Tom Waits, Joanna Newsom, Beats Antique, Bono, Danny Elfman, members of the Klezmatics and Fishbone.



Chelsea Delfino | Makeup SFX

Chelsea Delfino is an accomplished Special Makeup Effects artist who specializes in film and television. With nominations for multiple Guild Awards and MTV Video Music Awards, she is recognized for her dedication to creating hyper-realistic characters that provoke thought. Chelsea's prosthetic work has garnered national attention, appearing in commercial campaigns for brands like Nike, Sephora, and Bacardi. Her expertise extends to feature films, such as Oscar nominated *May December* and Sitges nominated *Divinity*.

Delfino has collaborated with renowned musicians such as Harry Styles, Doja Cat, Megan Thee Stallion, Ozzy Osbourne, The Weeknd, and Lil Nas X, demonstrating her versatility and skill.



Humberto Corte | Sound Designer

Humberto Corte is a Sound Designer based in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. As the owner and operator of Parlante Sound Inc., his sound design and mixing work has earned him 4 Leo Award wins, 1 NYX Award, and an Emmy Award Nomination in 2022 for his work on *Scaredy Cats* for Netflix.

Humberto's credits span over a wide range of feature films, TV series and commercials, also having done work for Universal Pictures and NEON (among other studios). Most recently, Beto served as the Sound Editor on Oz Perkins' *Longlegs* starring Nicolas Cage.

ROOXTER FILMS



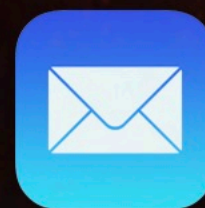
Rooxter Films is an independent production team from Vancouver B.C., Canada. It is formed by visual effects artists and other talented friends from the film industry whose extensive experience on blockbuster movies has invoked a hunger to create original stories. The team experienced success with their surreal short film *The Seahorse Trainer*, which screened at multiple film festivals around the world picking up multiple awards and nominations during its festival run. Most notably, the film won one of three jury awards at the Seattle Int'l Film Festival which qualified it to be considered for the 2020 Academy Awards.

We strive to break the mould and create narratives that do not fit within the category of mainstream storytelling. Rooxter Films invites viewers into a unique world of peculiar characters with narratives that are beautifully strange and accompanied by strong visuals to match. Inspired by the likes of Terry Gilliam, David Lynch and Jean-Pierre Jeunet, the purpose of our projects is to spark conversations and let the audience decide for themselves what the stories represent and ultimately, what they mean to them.

CONTACT



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