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ABORDER LE FILM
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The Creator of the Jungle de Jordi Morató

Extrait d'interview

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Jordi Morató tells the astounding story behind *The creator of the Jungle*



The Creator of the Jungle is one of those documentaries that sound unbelievable at first. Garrell, a middle aged man with a massive childlike imagination, spent his childhood playing in a forest by his home. As Garrell got older, his playfulness never went away. He kept building in the forest, creating dams, tunnels, labyrinths, towers, caves and many other things on a massive scale. With the help of a teenager and his camcorder, Garrell began to direct home movies where he played Tarzan. As Garrell's creations began to attract people, the real world began closing in on his fantasy, making Garrell literally set fire to his work before starting all over again.

Director Jordi Morató tells Garrell's astounding story over a 2+ decade period. Using Garrell's home movies, Morató combines the incredible found footage with his own narration explaining his subjects' story. The results are terrific, making *Creator of the Jungle* one of Hot Docs 2014's true gems. It's likely that Morató's film will go unseen by many, but those who have the opportunity to watch it will be in for something truly delightful.

In advance of the film's North American premiere, director Jordi Morató sat down with us to go over his arduous editing process, the benefit of a small story, how his own work reflects Garrell's, and much more.

How did you come upon Garrell's work?

I found the forest because of a friend of mine. One day he was driving on the highway and saw the towers. He stopped and checked it out, and he thought he was in the middle of the Ewok forest from Star Wars. He told me about it, and I went there a few days later. I was completely fascinated by it.

Was there a point when you realized you could turn this into a feature?

I didn't have a concrete idea at the beginning because I was more fascinated by the place. I started to film the forest just the sake of filming it. At first I thought it would be a reflexive movie, more contemplative, like an essay. Then I got to know Garrell and interview him. His own story was more fascinating than the forest. He told me all these stories about his 45 years of building it, and one day he told me about the old footage. I had been shooting for 9 months when he told me. I didn't believe him at first, but then I saw the footage and was fascinated. It's a crazy story, one 14 year old child with a 60 year old man doing films about Tarzan. I saw the footage and it changed my point of view completely. I knew at that moment I needed to tell the full 45 year story.

Garrell is really fighting to preserve his sense of childlike playfulness throughout the documentary. He's like a kid wanting to be left alone with his toys. He just wants to play.

I think it's one of the most important points, that Garrell is a 76-year-old child [*Laughs*]. I was fascinated because that kind of freedom is a dream for me. I wish I could be as free as Garrell, because Garrell spent all his life doing what he wants to do. When he was a child he went there [*to play*], and he kept doing it for the rest of his life. When he grew up, the situation got out of his hands completely. It started to be like a magic world for him. I think that's important because when we grow up we try to forget that. It's a basic thing, to be happy or to be yourself.



Tell me about the process of working with the tapes.

There was a lot of footage. It was difficult because it was mixed with different tapes. I had to reconstruct all the films because there's a part on one tape, another part on another tape, along with a lot of other material. I spent 18 months just on editing. It was really difficult work, but when I started to rebuild the films I realized something really important happened when Garrell had problems with other people in the forest. When people started to kill some of his animals and vandalize his work, Garrell started to do films where Tarzan runs away from civilization. For me it was the most important thing [*in the footage*], because I could start to tell about his life with this material. I think that's a kind of artistic expression from him, because instead of facing these people he let out his frustrations through the movies.

Your documentary has a narrow focus. It's entirely in Garrell's playground. You don't know who Garrell is outside of this context. What made you decide to keep the film within that one place?

From the beginning I had the idea that I want to focus just on Garrell's life in this forest. I was not interested in anything political, like what's happening in the town related to the forest. I don't want to use interviews of people from the town, his wife, etc. because I really want to portray this like a magic history. Kind of like a Hans Christian Andersen story. I wanted to focus on his own world.

I had shot some material outside the place. I have a lot of interviews of Garrell and other people, but I didn't want to use that in the film. I think with a smaller story you can do the biggest things. I think I can tell everything with just his story. That's a kind of stylistic choice, a more radical option.

The opening aerial shot over the forest is stunning. How did you do that?

It's a crazy story. My brother and I went on a hot air balloon trip. The trip started in a city about 20 kilometres away from the city where Garrell's forest is. The balloon just goes where the wind goes, you can't choose the direction, and we ended up passing over the forest. It was a crazy coincidence, and I said that from this day I believe in God [*Laughs*]. The balloon is the best way to do a shot in the air because it's so soft and peaceful.



How long did you spend filming?

I started four years ago, I was shooting for 2 years. It's a good thing because in four years a lot can happen, so I had the opportunity to shoot everything. For this project it was very important to dedicate a lot of time to shooting and getting lots of material.

Did you have any filmmaking influences on this project?

I studied cinema for 7 years in Barcelona. The biggest influences are Werner Herzog and Johan van der Keuken. I like the kind of films where you can feel the director behind the camera. For me it's very important to feel like you're with the story.

Is that generally what you prefer? You want people to feel your presence behind the camera?

It depends on the project, maybe, but yeah. During the editing process I went crazy. I reached the point where I had three different ways to tell the story. I made three films and destroyed them, the same way Garrell did with his work. Eventually I thought "No, no, I have to tell Garrell's story." I think it's impossible to tell this story without including [my own] point of view.

One of my favourite moments is when, after narrating over Garrell's films for so long, you simply let one of his Tarzan movies play out uninterrupted.

I used Garrell's footage to tell his story over 45 years, but at the same time I want people to enjoy the way Garrell made films. That's why I decided to give the audience the opportunity to watch, because he was the director. He chose the locations, the shots, and gave instructions to Aleix. It was fantastic because they have knowledge about continuity, editing and using music. For me that's real cinema. They don't have any pretension to make big films, they're just playing. That's the essential thing about this footage. Only a child can help make these movies because [only] a child can play with Garrell.