



Locarno Official Selection  
Concorso internazionale

# MANOJA D'TERRA

UM FILME DE BASIL DA GUNHA

PRESSKIT



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## ***PITCH***

Rosa, 20, left Cape Verde to settle in Reboleira, a poor district of Lisbon. She works in a bar to send money home to her children. Caught between the harassment of kingpins and daily police violence, Rosa tries to find solace among the women of the community. But her real escape is music...

# ***SYNOPSIS***

Rosa, 20, leaves Cape Verde after the death of her husband to settle in Reboleira, a poor district of Lisbon. She works for Nunha, 45, a local matron who runs a small bistro where the inhabitants spend their days.

Caught between the harassment of the local kingpins and daily police violence, Rosa knows she must keep her cool, as she has a mission: to send money to her two children. To console herself, she sings about her misfortune in the evenings.

As the days go by, her relationship with Nunha deteriorates and Rosa finds herself homeless. She tries to find comfort among the women of the community. But each encounter brings its own set of setbacks.

Rosa wanders the neighborhood in search of salvation, using music as her outlet. It's a music that tells a story that images can't necessarily tell.

# ***DIRECTOR'S NOTE***

At the origin of this project was the need to anchor images of the Reboleira neighborhood in collective memory.

The destruction of this place, where I've been living and filming for the past fifteen years, has accelerated. So I wanted to film it once again. To film these houses before they disappeared. These faces too. Especially those of the women too often left out of my previous films.

In the streets of Reboleira, music resonates from all sides. In the 90s, many of the pioneers of Cape Verdean funk moved here and never left. These sounds have been with me for several years. Before they disappeared into the rubble of this changing neighborhood, I felt it was my duty to remember, to «archive», to associate these sounds with the inhabitants through film.

The project began with a neighborhood, its women and its music.

While preparing this film, I met a young vocalist of raw talent, Eliana Rosa. Moved by her voice, charisma and stage presence, her place in my musical project became obvious.

Through her, I discovered many artists, and in particular a new generation of talented musicians who had the audacity to propose a work mixing funk, rock, jazz and traditional Cape Verdean music.

Inspired by the trajectories of the female characters present in the songs written by Eliana, we imagined a narrative around a central character, Rosinha, a young woman of mixed race who comes from a small island and arrives in mainland France.

Each Eliana Rosa song is a testimony, told from the point of view of a young African woman immigrating to Europe. Eliana and the characters she portrays in her songs experience this reality on a daily basis. She suffers from the way men look at her, and has little reason to hope for any other destiny than the one this world offers to those with her skin color. The cultural heritage she carries, her social condition and her gender are a blemish in a patriarchal society that still bears the stigma of the colonial era.

But her resilience, her way of standing tall and rising through life are the fruit of a socio-cultural construction from elsewhere, inspiring and revealing another way of being a woman. Perhaps that's what this film is all about: paying tribute to her way of being a woman.



# A MUSICAL

Music comes into play for the first time when Rosinha sings of her despair and asks the evil spirits around her to leave, in a song composed by Eliana Rosa and Henrique Silva entitled *Abernuncia*.

The text recounts both her feelings of sadness, but also the story that precedes the film, the story's off-field. Rosinha sings of the precariousness she experienced after the death of her children's father, and her desire to give them better living conditions. Then she implores the evil spirits to let her save those who are now her only reason for living.

At the other end of the film, *Manga Terra*, the song that gives the film its title, composed by the Acacia Maior collective and sung by Eliana Rosa, brings the story to a close. This music sings the praises of what comes from the land of Cape Verde, recounting through the story of a mango, how a young artist from a small island was able to be born in the eyes of the world in the capital of Portugal thanks to what she carries within her. A tribute to the power of music, and of course to Cape Verde. This song quickly struck me as the culmination of a long journey: that of those who

have to leave the place where they were born to try their luck elsewhere.

Music therefore has a role to play in the unfolding of the narrative. It evokes what the film doesn't show and, above all, gives access to the characters' inner feelings.

When Rosinha sings, she transforms herself and her environment. Musical moments allow the character to slip into a kind of waking dream, where the boundary between the real and the wonderful becomes porous.

The music allows her to express her feelings and recount her misfortune, like a kind of conjuration.

It's also music that bears witness to a reality, allowing this character to blossom in the eyes of the local residents, who had previously despised her.

And it is music, when Rosinha suddenly loses this hard-won esteem, that allows her to escape into a fantasized reality that becomes her only escape.



# A VOICE & MUSICIANS

Legend has it that in the spring of 1968, a cargo ship was preparing to leave the port of Baltimore with a large load of musical instruments. Its final destination was Rio de Janeiro, where a music festival was to be held.

But the ship mysteriously disappeared from radar. One can only imagine the surprise of the villagers of Cachaço, on the island of Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde, when they woke up a few months later to find a boat stranded in their fields, in the middle of nowhere, 8 km from a coastline.

Amilcar Cabral, leader of Cape Verde's struggle for independence, ordered that musical instruments be distributed equally in places with access to electricity, thus spreading the cosmic echo of mornas\*, coladeras\* and Funaná\* throughout its inhabitants and beyond...

Eliana Rosa and the many artists around her carry this «cosmic echo» within them. They are the children of a traditional music revisited.

Eliana Rosa carries within her the legacy of Cesária Evora, icon of Cape Verdean music. Eliana grew up in São Antão, Cape Verde, listening to the music of the barefoot diva.

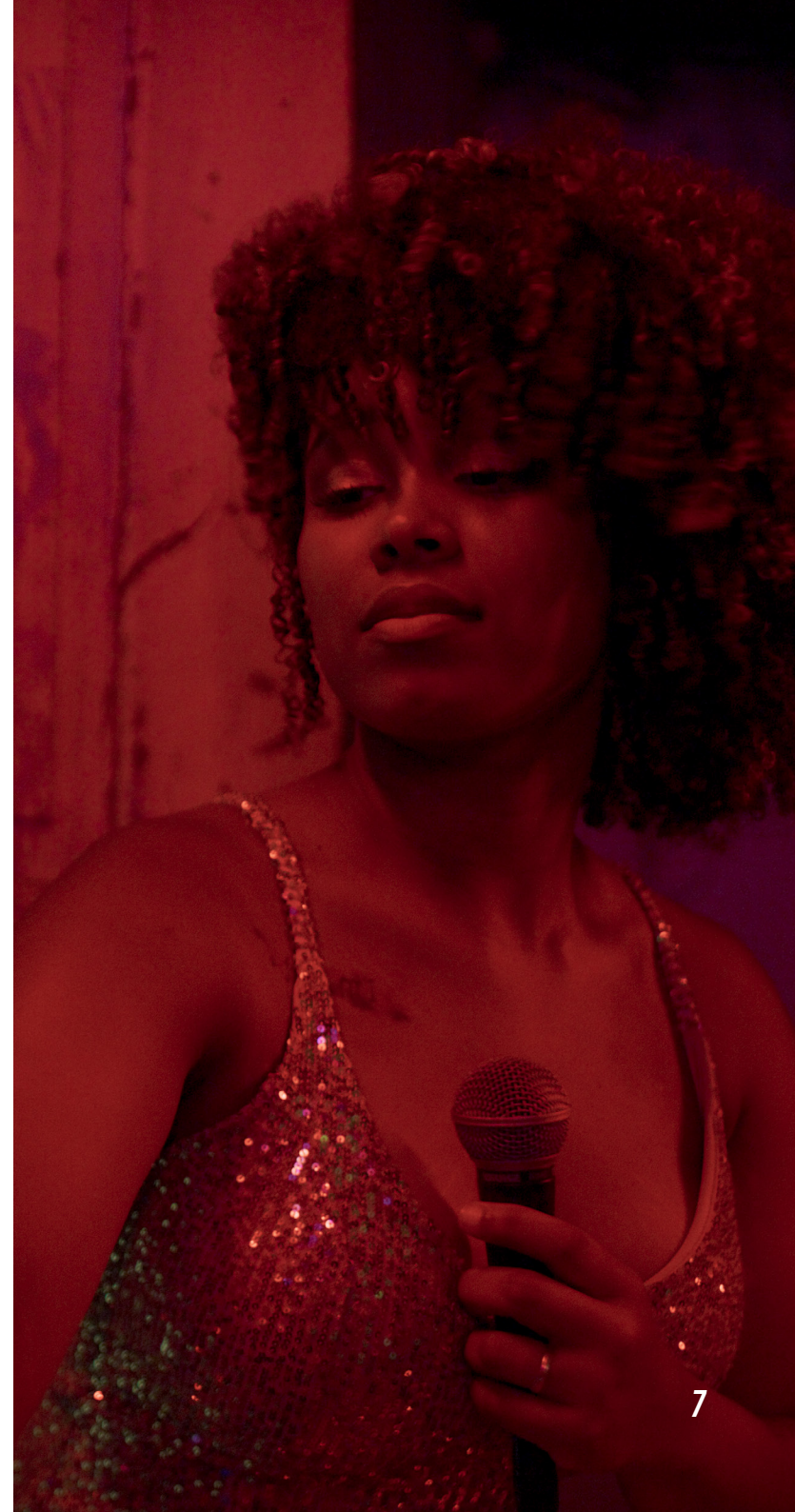
Eliana Rosa has been singing since

she was a child. Whether at sunrise on the way to the market where she accompanied her aunt, or on the porch of the family home at dusk, her smooth, powerful voice was already enchanting.

As a teenager, she moved to São Vicente, an island of culture and poetry. She sang in the small bars along Laginha beach and won a number of local music competitions.

Eliana left her native island at the age of 20 for Portugal. It was here that she came into contact with the new Cape Verdean music scene, participating in several projects and creating a fusion between traditional Cape Verdean music and blues, zouk, jazz and rock sounds. A musical in which each track is played live and filmed in sequence, without cuts or effects. A tribute to Cape Verdean culture in its purest form.

\*Traditional Cape Verdean music



# ***DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY***

Basil Da Cunha made a number of self-produced short films before joining Thera Production in 2008, where he directed «A Côté» (Locarno Festival 2009 and Grand Prix at the Vila do Conde Festival).

In 2009, he moved to the Reboleira district near Lisbon, where between 2011 and 2012 he directed «Nuvem» and «Os vivos tambem choram», both selected for the Directors' Fortnight.

In 2012, he completed a training course in cinema at HEAD in Geneva with his first feature film «Até ver a Luz», also selected for the Directors' Fortnight in 2013.

Since 2013, Basil da Cunha has been teaching at HEAD in Geneva. He shot «Nuvem Negra» (Biennale d'art contemporain de Genève 2014 and prize at Oberhausen).

In 2017 he shot his second feature film «O Fim do Mundo», selected for competition at Locarno in 2019.

In 2022, Basil Da Cunha signs the first episode of the documentary series «Futura!» (SSR).

In 2023, he presents «2720» (Festival Visions du réel and Grand Prix Oberhausen). In the same year, he presented Manga d'terra in the Locarno International Competition, and is currently preparing his next feature film, «O Jacaré».

## ***FILMOGRAPHIE***

**Manga d'terra** (Compétition internationale Locarno) /96'/ 2023/ FICTION

**2720** (Visions du réel, grand prix Oberhausen) / 24' / 2023 / FICTION

**Futura!** (épisode 1) / SSR / 20' / 2022 / DOCUMENTARY

**O Fim do Mundo** (Locarno IFF 2019) / 107' / 2019 / FICTION

**Nuvem Negra** (Oberhausen 2015, Vila do Conde 2015) / 19' / 2014 / FICTION

**Até ver a luz** (Quinzaine des Réalisateurs 2013) / 95' / 2013 / FICTION

**Os Vivos Tambem Choram** (Quinzaine des Réalisateurs 2012) / 31' / 2012 / FICTION

**Nuvem** (Cannes, Quinzaine des Réalisateurs 2011) / 30' / 2011 / FICTION

**A Côté** (Locarno IFF 2009) / 25' / 2009 / FICTION





# DATA SHEET

## WRITING AND DIRECTING

Basil Da Cunha

## MAIN ROLES

Eliana Rosa, Nunha Gomes, Evandro Pereira, Nuno Baessa, Lucinda Brito, Vera Semedo, Isabel Lopes, João Filipe, José Brasão, Gä

## PRODUCERS

Nicolas Wadimoff  
Palmyre Badinier

## CO-PRODUCERS

Basil Da Cunha

## EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Basil Da Cunha

## PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Annick Bouissou

## DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Patrick Tresch

## EDITING

Basil Da Cunha

## SOUND

Ricardo Leal, Francisco Veloso

## SOUND DESIGN, EDITING AND MIXING

Adrien Kessler

## MUSIC

Eliana Rosa, Henrique Silva, Luis Firmino

## PRODUCTION

Akka Films

## CO-PRODUCTION

Basil Da Cunha

Original title : Manga D'Terra  
Country of production : Swiss, Portugal  
Original release : Cape Verdean Creole  
and Portuguese  
Subtitles: french, english  
Length : 96'  
Image format 1.90 (full container) 4k  
DCP 25p  
Sound 5.1



# *CONTACT*

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