76. Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin
Berlinale Generation
Opening Film

A FABULOSA MÁQUINA DO TEMPO

THE FABULOUS TIME MACHINE

a film by
Eliza Capai

starring **Alice, Ana, Ana Vitoria, Joice, Laiane, Larissa, Laura, Lorenna, Manu, Manuellinha, Safira, Sophia, Thaemmy, Thabata**

Produced by **Mariana Genescá** Edited and Written by **Daniel Grinspum** and **Eliza Capai** Cinematography **Carol Quintanilha** Sound Recordist **Luísa Lemgruber**
Production Management **Clarice Rios** Production Ass. **Jacqueline Melo** Original Score **Décio 7** featuring **Juliana Linhares** Sound Design **Daniel Turini** Sound Supervision **Marília Mencucini**
Sound Mixing **Julia Teles** Colorist **Maisa Joanni**, **DAFB** / **The End** Post-Production Coord. **João Gila** Title and Poster Design **Joana Amador** and **Fiteiro**

Production: AMAVA cine
Co-production: globofilmes, GNEWS, CANAL BRASIL
With the support of: RIOFILME, PREFEITURA RIO, Cultura, BRASIL
Funding: BRDE, fsa, ancine
Associate producer: MANGUE FILMES
Distribution: DESCOLONIZA
Sales Agent: spliitscreen

"Before everything, it was dark. There was no light, there was nothing.
Then God started playing and making all things up, and He made the man from the dust, and the woman from the man...

Would women be different if they were made from dust too?

I'm glad I'm not a woman yet. Not me or my girlfriends." This is how The Fabulous Time Machine begins. Narrated by a 10-year-old girl living in Guaribas, Brazil, the film follows her and her friends' journey from childhood to adolescence.

Raised in evangelical religions, biblical mythology permeates their realities and imagination. They go about their routines, which include school, play, TikTok, household chores, and church services. Despite living in houses with dirt floors, without tap water, amid the aridity of the Brazilian sertão, they know and affirm that they were born with perks—able to eat, study, play, and dream of better futures.

The girls wonder what it would be like if they had a time machine, and so they travel back to the past through the recollections of each mother or grandmother:

**"The past was just living not to die. We come from the slaves.
There was no water here, there was no food, there was no place to live here."**

Encouraged to create scenes that dialogue with their experiences, they play they are screenwriters and actresses, questioning their realities and playfully dealing with complex issues, such as gender differences, marriage, alcoholism, and religion. This reveals how the sacred and the profane, light and shadows, intertwine. From gospel songs to funk music with explicit language, they eagerly dance and sing without understanding the lyrics. They joke about death, frustration, and fears. Childhood innocence gradually gives way to a mixture of curiosity and fear of becoming teenagers.

When they realize that fighting against the passage of time is useless, they travel to the future and envision their happy dreams of becoming independent and successful women.

Documentary, 72 min, 2026
Original Title: A Fabulosa Máquina do Tempo
Country of Origin: Brazil **Original language:** Portuguese

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

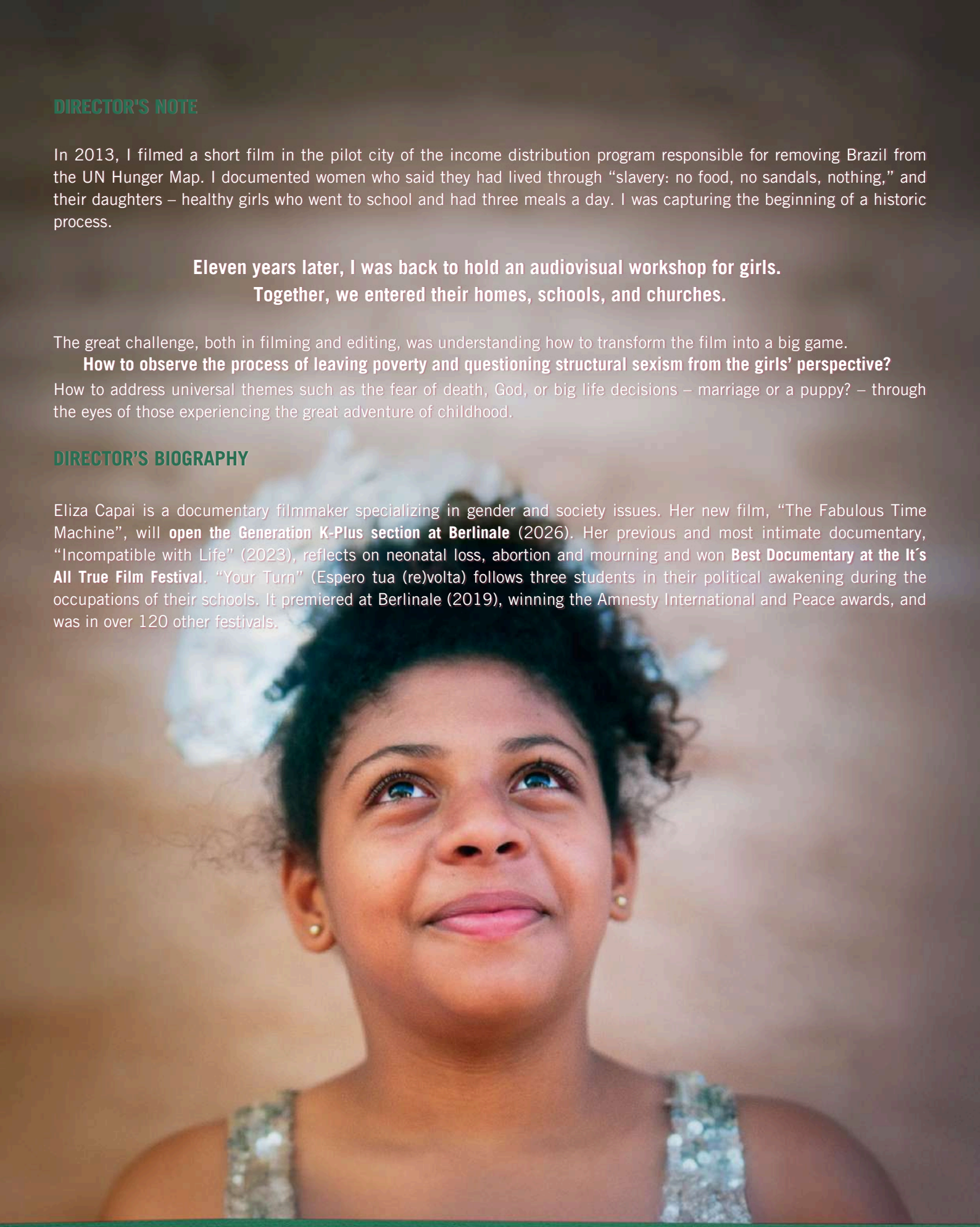
In 2013, I filmed a short film in the pilot city of the income distribution program responsible for removing Brazil from the UN Hunger Map. I documented women who said they had lived through "slavery: no food, no sandals, nothing," and their daughters – healthy girls who went to school and had three meals a day. I was capturing the beginning of a historic process.

Eleven years later, I was back to hold an audiovisual workshop for girls.
Together, we entered their homes, schools, and churches.

The great challenge, both in filming and editing, was understanding how to transform the film into a big game.
How to observe the process of leaving poverty and questioning structural sexism from the girls' perspective?
How to address universal themes such as the fear of death, God, or big life decisions – marriage or a puppy? – through the eyes of those experiencing the great adventure of childhood.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Eliza Capai is a documentary filmmaker specializing in gender and society issues. Her new film, "The Fabulous Time Machine", will **open the Generation K-Plus section at Berlinale** (2026). Her previous and most intimate documentary, "Incompatible with Life" (2023), reflects on neonatal loss, abortion and mourning and won **Best Documentary at the It´s All True Film Festival**. "Your Turn" (Espero tua (re)volta) follows three students in their political awakening during the occupations of their schools. It premiered at Berlinale (2019), winning the Amnesty International and Peace awards, and was in over 120 other festivals.



LOGLINE

In the arid Brazilian hinterland, girls play poised between their mothers' difficult pasts and fantastic dreams for the future. In a place where men are still seen as giants compared to women, the girls cross the threshold from childhood into adolescence.

Interview with Eliza Capai, director of The Fabulous Time Machine

Q: How did The Fabulous Time Machine come about? What's your relationship with the town?

A: In 2013 I won a grant from Agência Pública, the first non-profit investigative news agency in Brazil, to do research and produce a report on how Bolsa Família affected gender relations. Bolsa Família is a cash-transfer program for very poor families that channels the benefit to women and requires children and teenagers to attend school. It's noteworthy that it's only a small amount (around US$30 per family member per month), but it had and still has a huge impact on the country, helping remove Brazil from the UN's Hunger Map.

I then went to the program's pilot town, Guaribas, in the sertão of Piauí state, a place that once had one of Brazil's lowest HDIs. **I spoke with women my age who said they had once lived like slaves: no food, no shoes, only one set of clothes. I also spoke with their daughters: well-nourished girls who were going to school. I left knowing I would be back.**

In 2021 I was back to carry out the research for the film with support from the Göteborg Film Fund. I not only reunited with those families but also met a new generation of kids who, besides eating and going to school, were TikTokers with access to many other worlds. It felt like stepping into a time machine and landing in a future much farther ahead than the eight-year gap between my visits.

Then in 2024, thanks to a co-production involving Amana Cine (led by Mariana Genescá), Globo Filmes and Globo News, I returned to Guaribas with a small, excellent crew (Carol Quintanilha as cinematographer and Luisa Lemgruber as sound operator). We ran an audiovisual workshop for girls aged 7–12, aimed at understanding the best ways to tell this story from the children's perspective.

Q: How were the girls selected?

A: I met some of the girls in 2021. They were the TikTok kids I had filmed dancing in the town square by the church. One of them, Manu, I had photographed back in 2013, when she was only a month old. When we decided to make the trip, Clarice Rios, our production manager, went to Guaribas and selected other children. We ended up with different groups, some of them were neighbors or cousins, but they were diverse. There were kids from first grade through fifth grade. At that time, the production filed all the court authorizations required to film minors, so we could return and shoot with peace of mind, and we coordinated with the schools and Sesc Ler Guaribas, our main local partner.

During the workshops, the topics the girls brought up and the way they reacted inspired us and shaped how we would film. Naturally, some of them emerged as mains characters, either by the way they told the story (like Manuzinha, who became the film's narrator) or by unscripted moments in front of the camera (like Sophia, who, while interviewing her mother, learns that children can die and then runs off to play being a zombie).

Q: The film has many layers: the kids' daily routines, them interviewing their mothers, fictional scenes and the creation of those scenes... How did that process happen? And how did the children participate?

A: We arrived in Guaribas intending to make a film that, through the children's gaze and subjectivity, would reflect on escaping poverty — in the words of older people, escaping slavery — and on structural sexism. We started with a video workshop for 15 girls aged 7-12. One goal of the workshop, of course, was exchange — a social return — so we could teach what we know best: video. I say "we" because it was me, Carol Quintanilha (cinematographer) and Luisa Lemgruber (sound). Another goal was a first contact with the girls to understand not only what needed to be said, but which languages to use.

In the workshop, we split the kids into groups and showed each group footage shot in Guaribas, then asked them to create scenes from it. I would sometimes suggest ideas for scenes, but usually they thought my ideas were bad and proposed others (laughs). It was striking to realize that they often suggested scenes that subverted the status quo and questioned the sexism in the material. We improvised props with simple materials, creating playfulness around their concepts.

During one workshop exercise, Manuzinha began to shape the story's script, creating a voiceover. It was so sweet: the style of the text, the calm voice narrating. That became the inspiration for the narration, which was partially originated with her, and partially developed in the editing process.

Q: And there's also the device that gives the film its title, the time machine. How did it come about?

A: During the workshops, instead of asking about the past or their future dreams, we started using the image of a time machine: if you could step into a time machine, where would you go? What would you do? That game kept coming up in the interviews with their mothers. At that point, Carol Quintanilha suggested we stage a scene of the girls playing inside that machine. We made those outfits, that were futuristic and retro at the same time, and filmed them playing.

During the editing process, we realized the power of that play: it gave shape to the film's original research by letting the girls visit the recent past of their female ancestors' misery and fly into their dreams of the future.

Q: What were the biggest challenges?

A: Ufff... Filming with children is an adventure! I see two main challenges.
First, we were a minimal crew in the field filming fifteen kids, so you can imagine... Giving them freedom to come up with ideas and play while also requiring silence from everyone else not on camera was complicated (laughs). On the first trip, in 2024, we stayed six weeks; on the second, in 2025, two weeks. We were living in a very different reality from ours, often without piped water and in intense heat. Workdays were long: besides shooting and logging, we made props and staged the little scenes the girls created, and day by day we debated what was most interesting, which aesthetic-narrative path to follow, which stories were the most engaging, and which child to follow more closely. It was intense. And of course the kids would show up at our house during downtime to see what we had filmed or just to chat; it's a very small town where they roam the streets alone. But I see fragility as a source of strength. Being only three of us created deep intimacy with the children: we became their trusted adults, the grown-ups who looked at them with curiosity and admiration. That forged beautiful bonds that I think are reflected in the film, bonds that allowed us to be gently welcomed into their homes and the church, and to earn the trust of their families, who let us take the girls to film in abandoned houses or up on the mountains in Serra das Confusões (and now to Berlin!). Everything happened in a very safe, collaborative way.

The second challenge is something every documentarian faces to some extent: in every film I make, I keep in mind that, while I seek a narrative arc and the best way to tell the story, the so-called "characters" are people who will feel the impacts of the film, during shooting and after release. I've always worried about this, but now that the "characters" are children, that care reached new proportions. It was there in every stage: from trying during shooting not to exclude kids who would be less central in the final film, to giving up scenes that might make the film stronger but could negatively affect these children's lives. This concern is still present: now that we're headed to the Berlinale premiere, for example, we're debating whether to take some of the girls. I've always dreamed they would experience the magic of the red carpet. Just imagine, it will be their first time flying and going to a cinema! And their first time in a theater will be in a room with one thousand people seeing them on the big screen. But it's impossible to take all fifteen girls, so making the dream come true for some also means managing the disappointment of most of them. Then there's the return trip: how will it feel like to come back from that abundance — hot showers, buffet breakfasts — to a life without piped water? All these worries and cautions are within me not only in production meetings but also in my dreams. By the way, I only dream about preparing the trip, going to the zoo, a lost child (laughs).

I carry these challenges with great responsibility as well as with a lot of beauty. They're about giving visibility to life stories and realities historically excluded from positive protagonism in our cinema. These fabulous girls are active in understanding their worlds and dare to dream of futures that break from the history of slavery and structural sexism they grew up in. And they allow the girls to see how fascinating their own lives and stories are, noticing they are looked at with care, smiles, and emotion by people from other worlds. They begin to discover other possible worlds and realize they can also be part of other realities, which brings new role models and expands their capacity to dream and to pursue ways to make their dreams come true.

Q: This year the Berlinale Generation section includes four Brazilian feature films. In recent years Brazilian presence has been strong. In fact, you were there in 2019 with Your Turn. How do you think your work contributes to an imagined world within films centered on young people or children?

A: I see two central points in this debate. First: how do we, as adults, change to really listen to and see children and young people as individuals who think, feel and can bring freshness and creativity to the ways we understand, relate to, live in and transform the world? In both The Fabulous Time Machine and Your Turn, I was deeply committed to listening to the main characters. In Your Turn, those teens managed to grab the attention of Brazilian society and powerfully spark off the debate on public education, sexism and racism. In The Fabulous Time Machine, I'm older than the girls' mothers, and the girls were between seven and thirteen during shooting. And the exercise I did while shooting and editing is the same one I hope audiences do: looking with curiosity and respect at this new generation, and understanding how they see the world. How do they understand structural sexism and gender relations? How do they perceive their economic and social reality, knowing they are the first generation born with the right to three meals and to school? How do they relate to the miserable, slaveholding past of their female ancestors? And how do they dream their futures? This exercise refreshed how I see life and gave me a kind of hope through the complexity of our humanity.

And then comes the second point: historically our cinema has the tradition of creating dystopian futures. From a young age, we're fed stories that in the future there will be no water, that we will be invaded by aliens, or that we will become killer cyborgs. Our imagination of the future is shaped by dystopia, chaos, war and despair. I want to help build cinemas where the future can be desirable, pleasant, abundant, joyful, and peaceful. To reach that pleasant future we must learn to dream it. As a documentarian I try to find beauty, abundance and poetry in our reality. That doesn't mean ignoring historical violences and inequalities. On the contrary, to me it means facing that past, which is often present, and dreaming ways to transform it. I want to help create an inspiring imaginary in which we live with more empathy and peace. I can't think of better teachers for that than children.

Q: What does premiering The Fabulous Time Machine at the Berlin Festival mean to you?

A: For me it's a dream come true. Premiering at a festival as large and important as the Berlinale, which is also deeply political, offers the best conditions for this independent documentary to take flight. I've dreamed about this film for thirteen years; Mariana Genescá (producer and founder of Amana Cine) has worked to make it real for seven. We spent a year and a half editing with Daniel Grinspum, four months composing music with Décio7, and we had a wonderful, meteoric contribution from Juliana Linhares, who composed our theme song. Now we want this film, these girls and their complex stories, and the story of our Brazil, to reach people, move them, and help foster a more sensitive, empathetic humanity. Without a doubt, Berlin is the best launchpad to propel our fabulous time machine.

PRODUCER'S NOTE

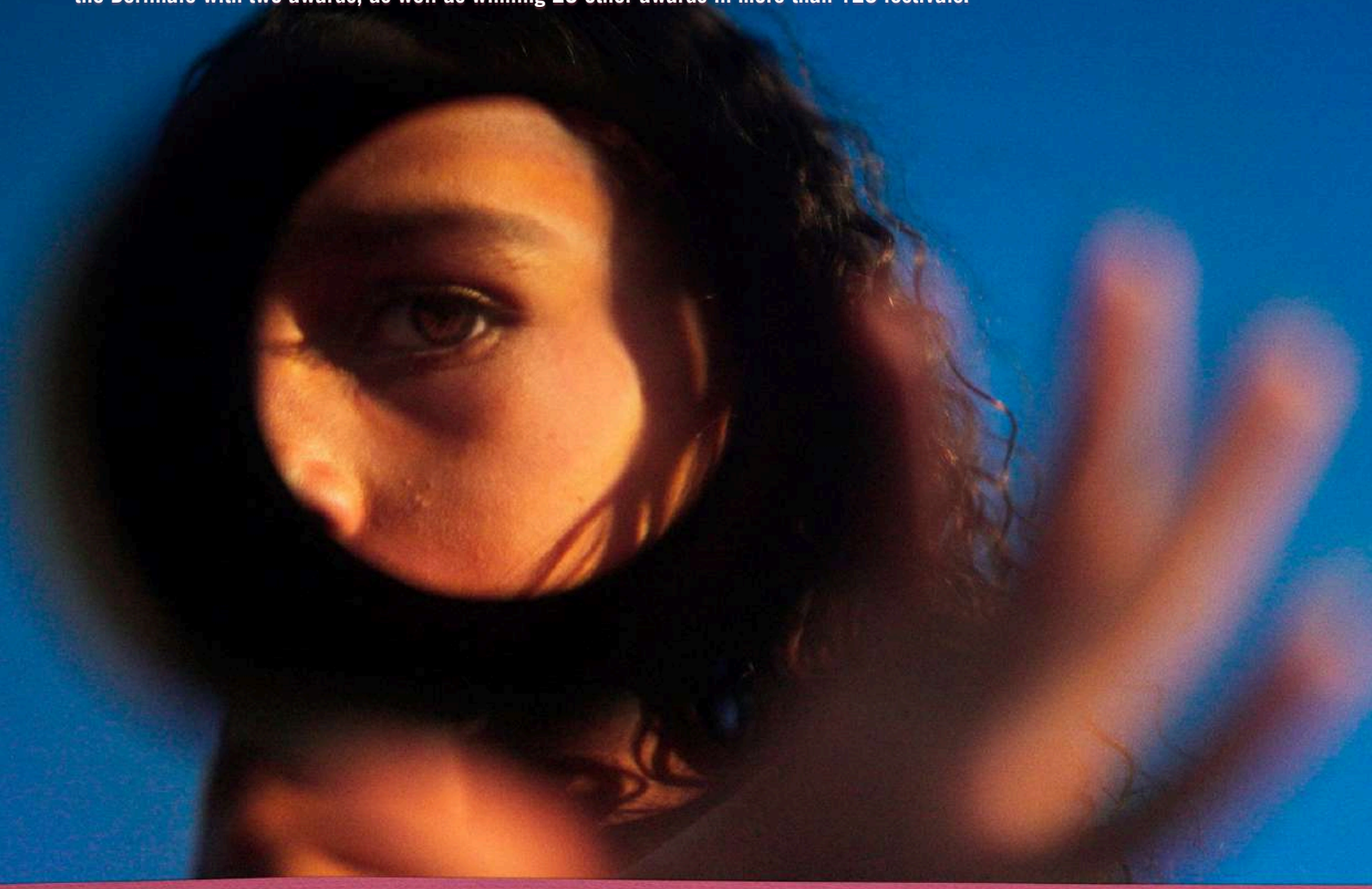
A fabulous journey that shows in a ludic way, from the perspective of the children, the profound social transformations Brazil has experienced in the last decades with the Bolsa Família income transfer program.

The production relied on a talented and dedicated team that combined professionalism to a lot of affection and care for our girls. Everything was conducted through Eliza Capai's considerate and sensitive direction.
Filmmaking with social impact, construction of identity and memory. Which refuses to accept the end-of-the-world dystopia and seeks to create futures in which our children dream of living.

The making of the film was possible thanks to the partnership and coproduction with Globo Filmes / GloboNews, through the Brazilian Audiovisual Law, and Canal Brasil. The production also counted on resources from the Audiovisual Sector Fund (BRDE / Ancine) and the support of RioFilme.

PRODUCER'S BIOGRAPHY

Amana Cine is a Brazilian independent production company that focuses on social impact documentaries.
The works produced include series, mid-length and seven feature films, all of which were screened in the world's main film festivals and were on TV channels and international platforms. "Fabulous" is the opening feature film at the Generation Kplus competition of the 2026 Berlinale. The series **"O Prazer É Meu" ("The Pleasure Is Mine") is a 2025 International Emmy nominee in the documentary category**. "Cheiro de Diesel" ("Smell of Diesel", 2025) won the Festival do Rio Troféu Redentor. "Incompatível com a Vida" ("Incompatible with Life", 2023) was voted the best film in the It's All True Festival and chosen to represent Brazil in the Platino Awards. **"Espero tua (re)volta" ("Your Turn", 2019) premiered at the Berlinale with two awards, as well as winning 25 other awards in more than 120 festivals.**



CONTACT

Sales Agent: marcella@splitscreen.hr
Festivals : lorena@splitscreen.hr
Producer: mariana@amanacine.com.br
Director: eliza@elizacapai.com

afabulosamaquinadotempo.com
@afabulosamaquinadotempo

International Publicist:
NOISE Film & TV
Kai Hermann:
kai@noisefilmpr.com