

ANIMATION IS  
FILM FESTIVAL  
Official Selection 2022



# TITINA

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## ABOUT TITINA

Titina tells an entertaining and exciting story of an almost forgotten voyage of discovery: The conquest of the North Pole by airship in 1926. The film is an amusing and charming recollection of absurd adventures and human emotions, as seen through the eyes of the little terrier Titina.

Titina was a real dog who led an extraordinary life, taking her from a harsh existence in Rome's back alleys to a lofty view over the North Pole. It is an astonishing tale filled with suspense, humor, and captivating music. The story works on different levels to make it enjoyable for both children and adults. Inspired by true events, Titina is a compelling and accessible history lesson.

## TECHNICAL SPECS

**Genre** Family

**Format** Classical 2D Animation, 90 min

**Core Target Group** Families With Kids 6-12 Years

**Launch** Autumn 2022

**World Sales** Les Films du Losange

## TEAM

**Director** Kajsa Næss

**Scriptwriter** Per Schreiner

**Character Designer** Siri Dokken

**Art Director** Emma McCann

**Animation Director** Marie-Laure Guisset

**Lead Story Artist** Dyveke Skøld

**Editors** Jens Christian Fodstad, Anders Bergland, Zaklina Stojcevska

**Sound Designer** Gisle Tveito

**Composer** Kåre Chr. Vestrheim

**Producers** Tonje Skar Reiersen, Lise Fearnley, Viviane Vanfleteren

**Production Companies** Mikrofilm (No), Vivi Film (Be)





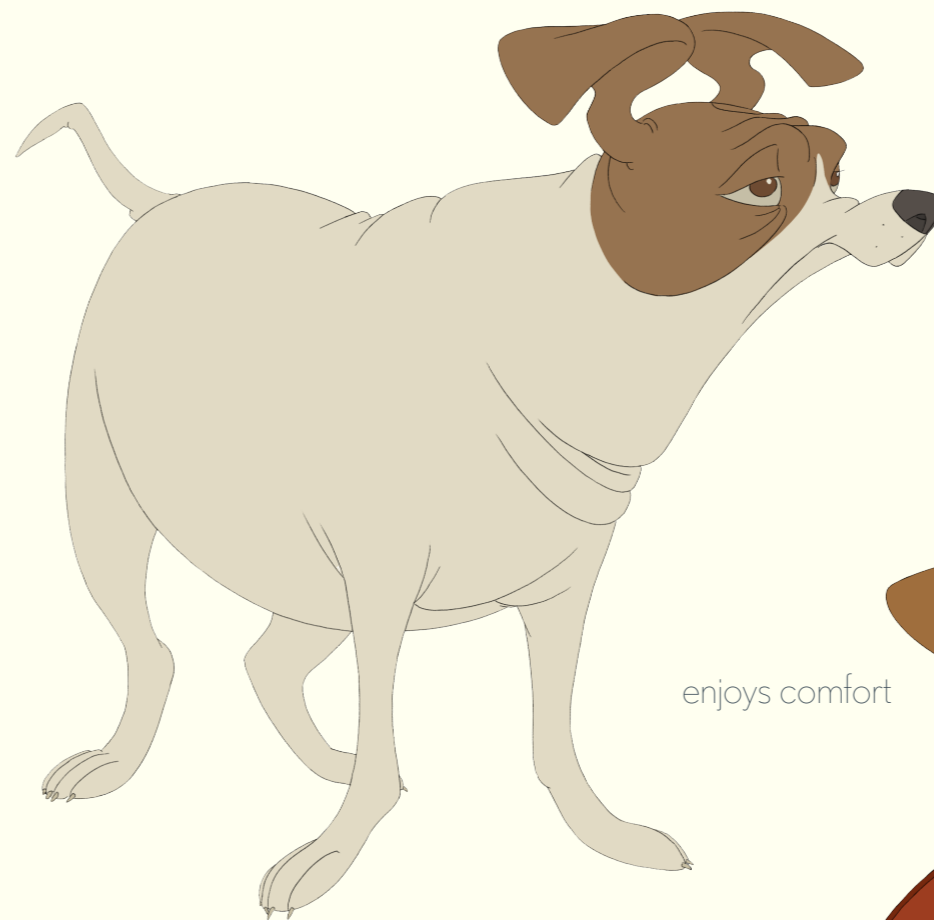
## SYNOPSIS

Italian airship engineer Umberto Nobile enjoys a quiet life with his beloved dog Titina, who charmed him into rescuing her from the streets of Rome.

One day, Norwegian explorer superstar Roald Amundsen contacts him and orders an airship to conquer the North Pole. Nobile seizes the opportunity to go down in history. He brings Titina along, and the unlikely trio sets out on an expedition to the last undiscovered place on Earth. Their quest is successful but, in the aftermath, the two men start to quarrel over the glory...

Through the eyes of the four-legged celebrity Titina, (re)discover a true story of triumph and defeat.

CHARACTERS



curious and friendly

enjoys comfort

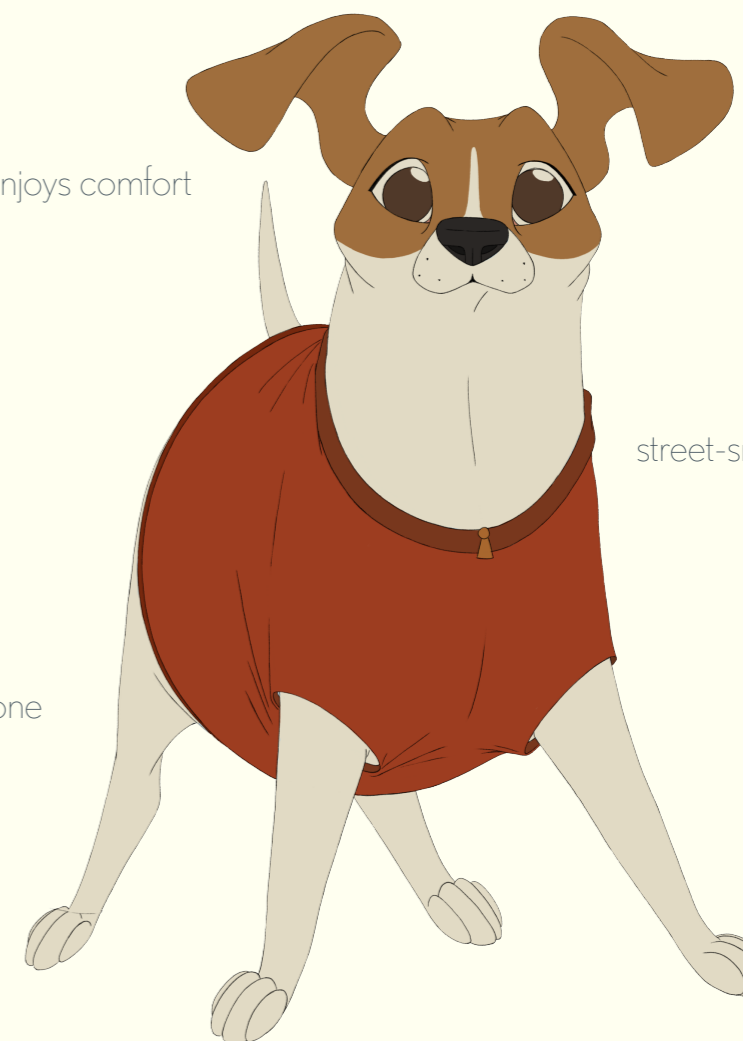
**Titina**

The tiny terrier Titina is a true charmer and reveals all her emotions with unmistakable doggy body language. The pragmatic dog purposefully enchants Nobile, who rescues her from a harsh life on the streets of Rome and names her after this hit song:

[Billy Murray sing "Titina" - 1925](#)

Titina loves comfort and the good things in life, which she consumes and enjoys without hesitation. When Nobile takes her in, she has everything she needs: food, shelter and affection. She has no enthusiasm whatsoever for dramatic expeditions and is totally unsuited for polar adventures. Titina's perspective reveals how small motivations can drive great men.

loyal to the bone



street-smart charmer

unfit for polar adventure



### CHARACTERS



ambitious romantic



easily offended

somewhat naïve

continental and intellectual

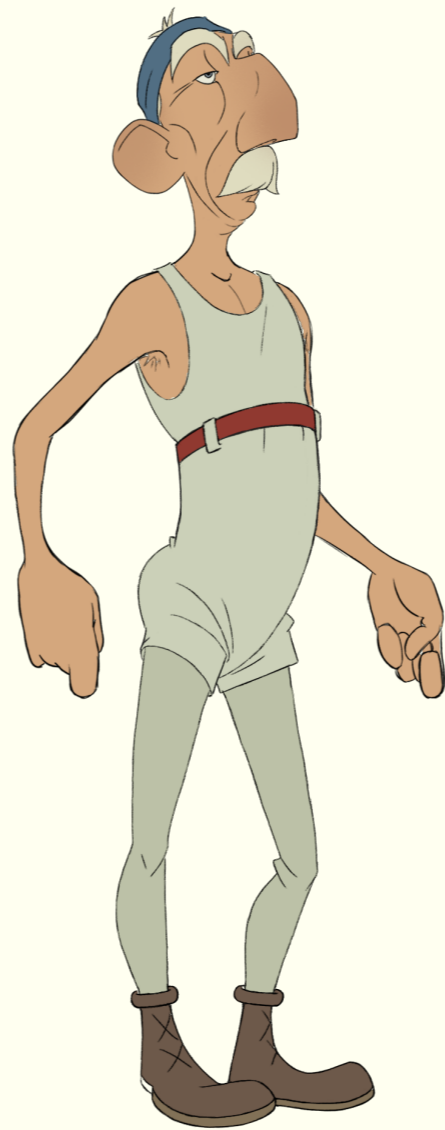
### Umberto Nobile

Nobile is a brainy, and somewhat soft fellow. He's fond of jazz music and continental comforts. His dream was to become a pilot. But he's too short and ended up as a brilliant airship engineer.

Nobile is a man who practices his profession confidently and with mastery. Though recognized for his great technical skills, he does perhaps not receive the admiration he deserves. Passionate, he truly believes that almost anything can be solved with airships. He is a modern, intellectual man with a keen interest in art and politics, well-read and sophisticated. Nobile is gentle, caring, and sensitive. He loves Titina and to go anywhere without her is unthinkable, even to the North Pole.



CHARACTERS



stubborn and stiff

honorable

fearless ambition

natural leader

PR genius

**Roald Amundsen**

Amundsen is world-famous as the ultimate polar explorer. He is driven by an obsession to be the first where no man has gone before. His ambition knows no limits, and he won't allow anything to get in his way.

Amundsen is strategic and fearless. He is stubborn, determined, with highly developed tunnel vision. He appears to be a generous man, upright and principled, but always keeps his eyes on the horizon, and doesn't necessarily notice other people's feelings.



## DIRECTOR STATEMENTS BY KAJSA NÆSS

TEXT BY REBEKAH VILLON

Award-winning director Kajsa Næss, like all Norwegians, was familiar with the legendary polar explorer Roald Amundsen and his accomplishments. But when she stumbled across the story of the airship Norge and the discovery of the North Pole, she was surprised. Not only was she unfamiliar with this aspect of Amundsen's adventures, but the presence of a small dog on the expedition was striking. Næss says:

*I came across this particular story by chance. I was surprised that I hadn't already heard of it, because this was a huge media event in the 1920s, and the airship makes it such a spectacle. But it faded into history over time, and most Norwegians today don't know how Amundsen died or that he disappeared searching for Umberto Nobile. So even though Amundsen himself is an icon, this part of his life is less known.*

*The presence of Titina is another thing that drew me to this story. As Norwegians, we all know that if you bring dogs to the polar region, they have to work, or you should be able to eat them. The Arctic is no place for little lapdogs. Why would you bring a pet to such a place? It's very strange to me. This made this story so interesting. And how did it actually work to have a tiny dog travelling in an airship?*

*I was also charmed by the airship itself. It's so large, and so fragile, and so strange. The image of the airship against the polar landscape worked so well, along with this little dog.*





With the framework of the story in mind, Næss went to award-winning screenwriter Per Schreiner, who suggested making a feature. For Næss, it was important that the film focus on the characters and the emotion, building drama in the interpersonal relationships, rather than telling the standard heroic tale of men conquering nature. Viewing events from Titina's perspective enabled a new way to relate to the story, making it both more complex, and more accessible:

*We have a very classic way of telling these kinds of tales in film, with heroic men doing challenging things, but I didn't want to tell that kind of story. For me, it was more interesting that they made strange choices, and had complex relationships. For example, in the film they get more interested in arguing about who has the biggest flag, than in actually celebrating the discovery of the North Pole.*

*It's a film about small humans in a big landscape. They quarreled, they were stubborn, they were selfish. They had relatable human feelings, which is where we get the drama from for this film.*

*Using Titina as an observer allows the audience to see these choices differently. Titina actually experiences the nature and landscape, while the men don't pay attention, because they are too busy competing with each other. She has her own adventure in parallel with theirs.*

**During production, despite Covid, Næss moved to Belgium so she could work directly with the production teams in Brussels and Gent. She and animation director Marie-Laure Guisset had a very specific animation style in mind, inspired by the films of Jacques Tati and Wes Anderson:**

*A lot of classical 2D animators are trained in a more flamboyant style, with lots of movement in every frame. They've learned all kinds of rules about easing in and out, and secondary action, and they want to use all these techniques. We were asking them to be very restrained, with just a slight movement of the hand, or a turn of the head, and for some animators it was quite difficult.*

Naturally there are some characters who are more cartoony and have their own movement styles. Mussolini, for example, is much more exaggerated in his expressions, so for the animators who are used to that kind of motion, there were scenes where they could really go all in and have fun with it. It actually works quite well with the more contained animation of the main characters, highlighting the differences between them, and letting the audience consider what those differences might mean.

Because I was on site, I could work very closely with Marie-Laure Guisset, the animation director, who really understood this approach, and did a great job casting animators. They really brought a lot of emotion to every shot because of this restrained approach. Also, because I was there, I could communicate directly with the animators, and they could bring their own ideas to the work.

When you are working with really good animators who have a lot of experience and ideas, it's important to be open to that, and see how it can be used. It helps them feel a sense of ownership over the production, rather



than just working for someone. This is incredibly important for creative people. And as a director, this type of collaboration gives you a lot of free gifts: you have access to these extra ideas that you wouldn't have gotten otherwise.

#### **And how would Kaja Næss capture the essence of the film?**

*Titina* is a film about small feelings in a vast landscape. About two disappointed men discovering a completely empty place. And about the lapdog that lived to tell the tale.

## THE TRUE STORY

On May 12, 1926, the Norwegian polar explorer Roald Amundsen, the Italian airship engineer Umberto Nobile, Nobile's dog Titina and the crew of the airship "Norge" became the first to fly over the North Pole.

Numerous explorers, including Amundsen himself, had tried to reach this last white spot on the map for decades. At the time, no one knew what they would find at the pole, and especially in the area between the pole and Alaska, Amundsen hoped there would be unexplored land.

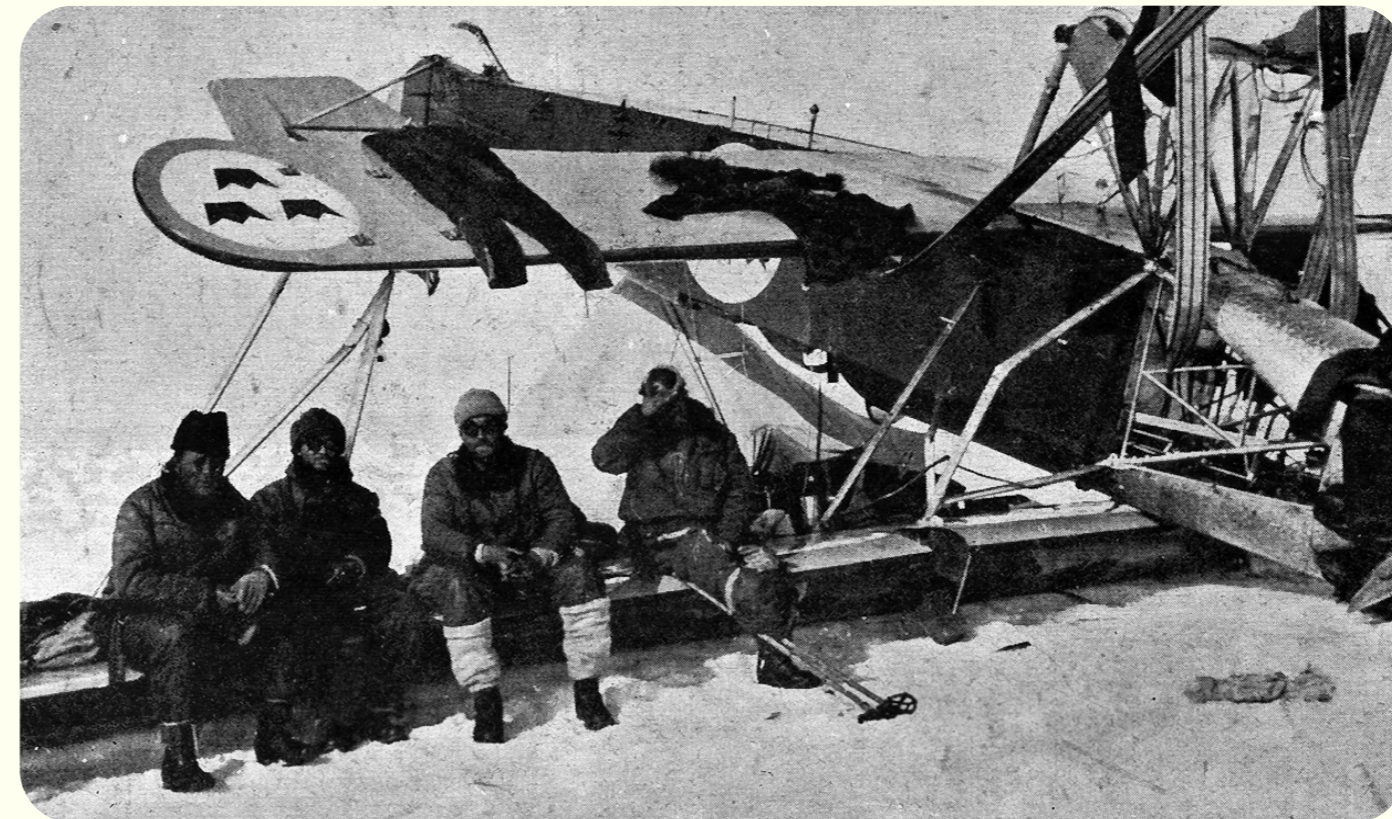
The Norge expedition was sponsored by the adventurous American millionaire Lincoln Ellsworth and a Norwegian foundation for aeronautic travel (Norsk Luftseiladsforening). The Italian state led by fascist dictator Benito Mussolini agreed to sell the airship for 75,000 USD and then buy it back after the expedition for 46,000 USD, and hence Italy was an indirect sponsor of the voyage. The airship was designed by Umberto Nobile prior to Amundsen's plans, but Nobile modified it for flight in arctic conditions.

The official name of the expedition was the "Amundsen-Ellsworth-Nobile Transpolar Flight", but in the popular press it was entitled "From Rome to Nome". The press attention was massive, and Titina became a star. During the expedition, she had her own diary in *The New York Times*.



The airship took off from the Norwegian island Svalbard on May 11, and the next day, they reached the North Pole. It is impossible to land an airship without dozens of people and infrastructure on the ground, so they flew over this geographic landmark and threw flags out of the window to mark the conquest. The pole turned out to consist of nothing but drifting ice and there was no land between the Pole and Alaska either. Due to bad weather, the airship Norge crashed in Teller rather than Nome in Alaska. The expedition was still a triumph, but in the aftermath, Amundsen and Nobile got embroiled in an undignified public quarrel over the glory.

Nobile established a second expedition to go up to the North Pole again in the airship Italia. The official reason was to carry out scientific research, but the popular opinion was that Nobile wanted to redeem himself and prove that he was capable of reaching the pole without any Norwegians onboard. In 1928 he was ready with and all Italian crew (except one Swede and one Czech), initiated by himself and backed by the Italian Royal Navy and the City of Milan. The Navy was naturally controlled by Mussolini and, being a communist, an alliance with the fascist dictator must have been a tough call to make for Nobile.

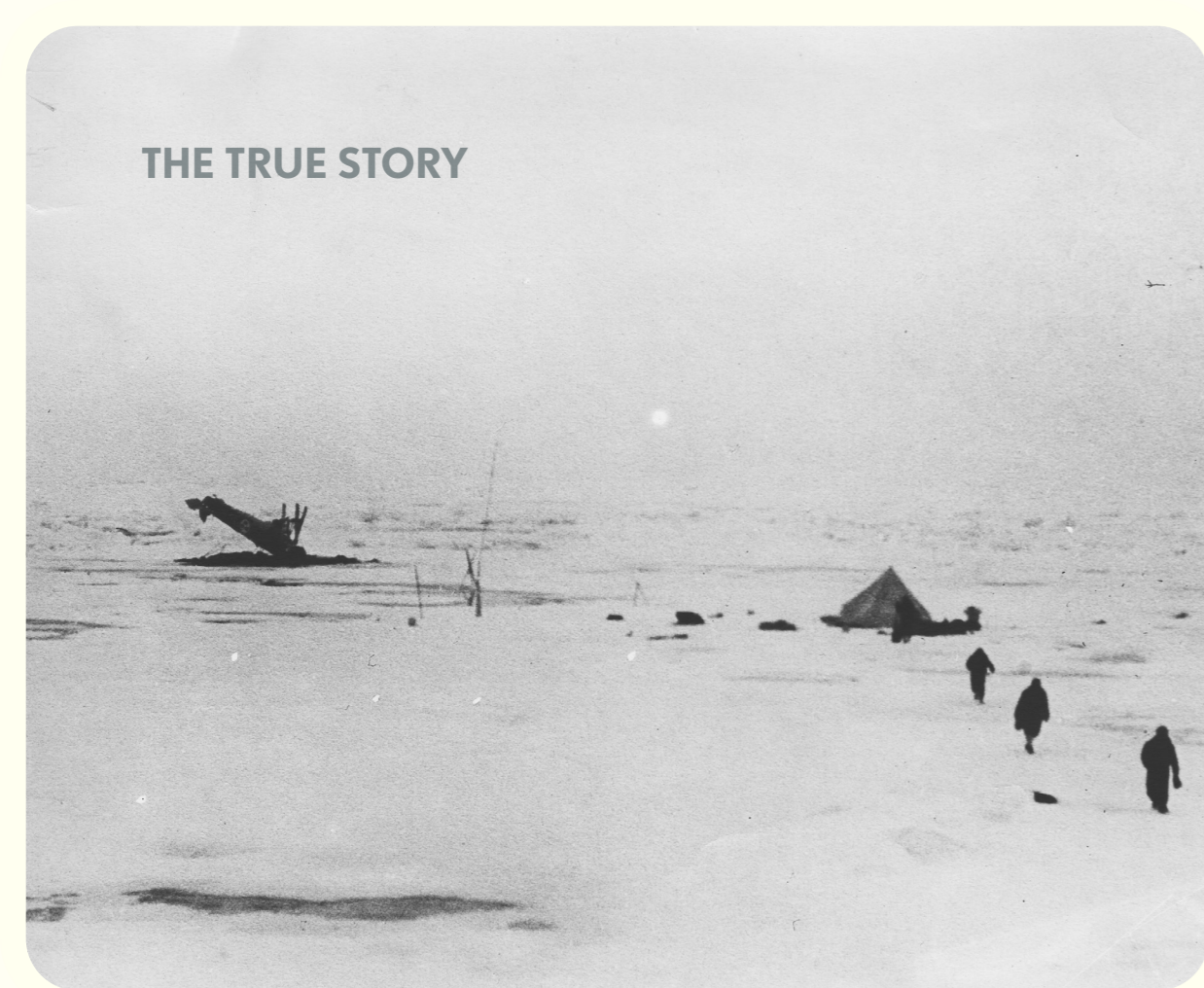


## THE TRUE STORY

And this time disaster struck. The airship Italia reached the North Pole, but on the way back to Svalbard, they were caught in terrible weather. The airship crashed in the remote Arctic and the balloon itself flew away with men flung to their certain death. Eight crewmen died, and Nobile broke his leg, ribs, and skull. Nobile, Titina, and the other survivors spent up to six weeks stranded on the ice, while numerous rescue operations were mounted. Search parties from many nations took part, and the rescue operation became the biggest mediated event of the 1920s. Amundsen also wanted to contribute to the search. He was eventually denied access to the official Norwegian operation but managed to get French backing and flew out with a crew of four Frenchmen and one Norwegian aviator. They took out from Tromsø on the Norwegian mainland and set course for the Arctic Island Svalbard. No one had flown this distance before, and the seaplane Latham 47 might not have been fit for such an extreme journey. They most likely flew into bad weather, and something went terribly wrong. The aircraft disappeared. Amundsen, his crew and the plane got lost, never to be found.

Eventually, Nobile and Titina were flown out by airplane, ahead of their crewmen against Nobile's wishes. He wanted to stay with his men, but the order from Mussolini was to bring Nobile out. Consequently, Nobile was derided in the press, blamed for Amundsen's death and for abandoning his men. His surviving crew were later rescued by a Russian icebreaker.

Titina was the first animal to become an international super star. After finding fame in 1926, she visited Japan, was invited to the White House, and toured Hollywood. This dog's unlikely life triggered our imagination, and we realized that telling the story about Amundsen and Nobile with Titina at the centre gave us the opportunity to shape a very different polar epic.



## MIKROFILM

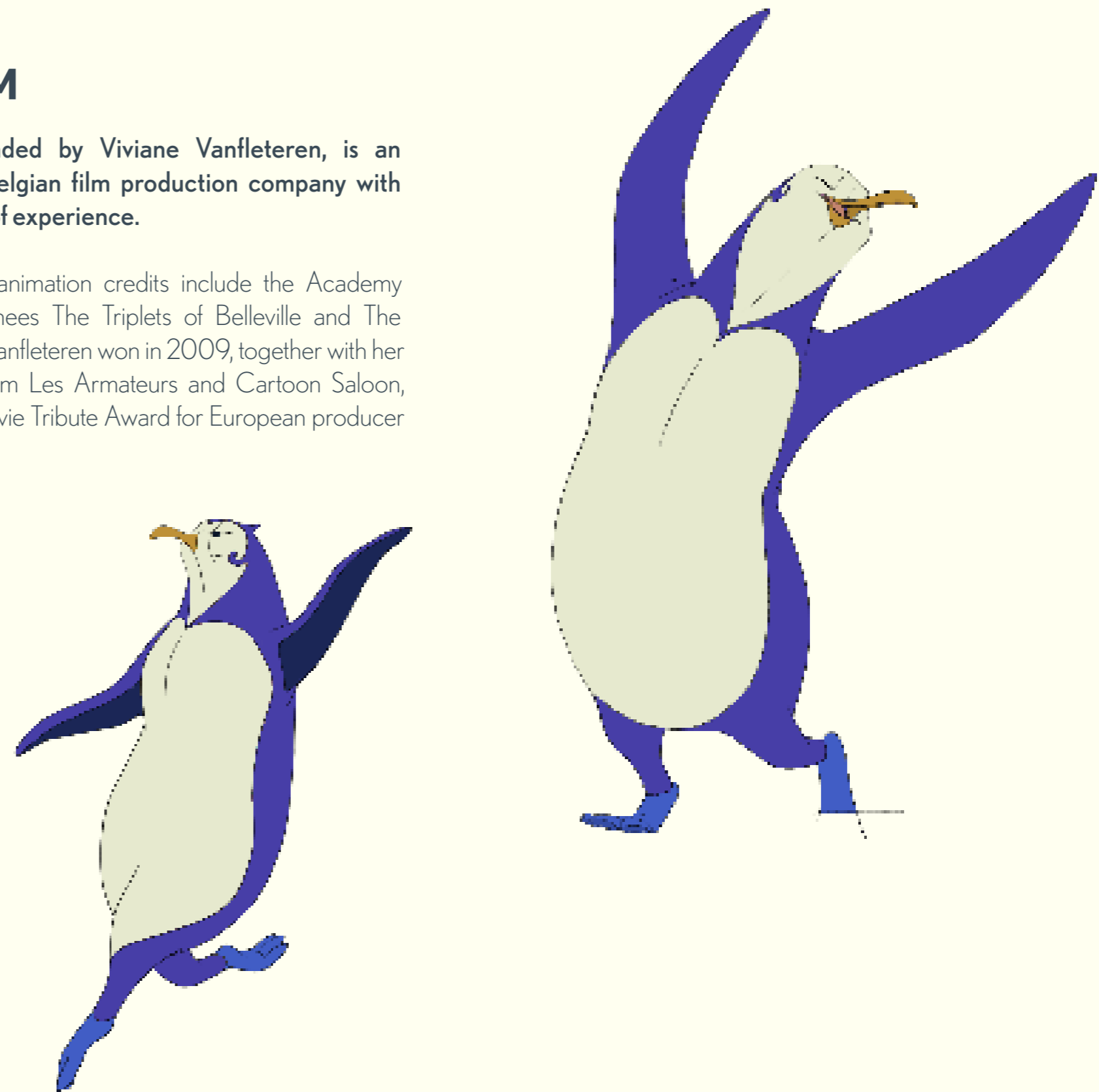
Established by director Kajsja Næss and producer Lise Fearnley in 1996, Mikrofilm is an animation studio and production house located in Oslo, Norway.

Mikrofilm has produced 30+ short films winning wide international acclaim, most notably an Academy Award® for Best Animated Short (The Danish Poet in 2007) and an Academy nomination (Me and My Moulton in 2015). In 2020, Mikrofilm co-produced the feature The Ape Star, which premiered in the main competition in Annecy and was nominated for Best animated Feature at the European Film Award. Titina is the company's first feature as delegate producer.

## VIVI FILM

Vivi Film, founded by Viviane Vanfleteren, is an independent Belgian film production company with over 30 years of experience.

The company's animation credits include the Academy Award® Nominees The Triplets of Belleville and The Secret of Kells. Vanfleteren won in 2009, together with her coproducers from Les Armateurs and Cartoon Saloon, the Cartoon Movie Tribute Award for European producer of the year.





## KAJSA NÆSS

**After 25 years as an innovative short animation director, Kajsa Næss is ready for her feature film debut with TITINA.**

Næss is known for her playful, humorous and humanistic films. Her award-winning shorts have featured in prestigious festivals such as Clermont-Ferrand, Annecy and Tribeca. In addition to her many film awards, Næss has been granted the Norwegian Ministry of Culture's Human Rights Award. Her dozen credits include *It Was Mine* (2015), *It's Up To You* (2013), *Deconstruction Workers* (2008), *Leonid Shower* (2004) and *Mother Said* (1999). Kajsa founded the Oscar winning studio Mikrofilm together with producer Lise Fearnley in 1996.

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