



# DEAR CHILD

A film by Luca Ammendola





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A film by **Luca Ammendola**  
Produced by **Nikolai Galitzine, Haukur M, Lukasz Długołęcki** and **Mauro Pizzo**  
Music by **Zbigniew Preisner**

Run time: 76min

Shot on location in a drug rehabilitation center in Brazil, DEAR CHILD is the story of a group of teenagers reflecting on their past as drug traffickers. When left to face the consequences of their actions, a missionary priest will try to show them it is unbounded love and compassion that will keep their spirit alive.

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**[www.dearchildfilm.com](http://www.dearchildfilm.com)**





## SYNOPSIS

A journalist writes a letter to his unborn child from an island off the coast of Brazil triggered by memories of a recent journey.

He has returned from a drug rehabilitation centre in Rio De Janeiro, where he met a missionary priest who shelters teenagers on the run from the drug cartels.

There he witnessed a group of teenagers trying to turn their lives around from a past of drugs and violence. They spent time together playing football, flying kites and catching lizards... and slowly, they began to open up and tell their stories.

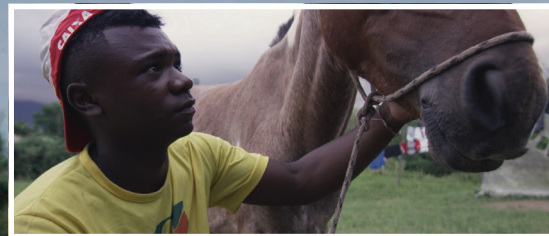
As part of their activities, a Brazilian social worker taught the kids filmmaking. They were shown the basics of how to write a story and operate a camera. Soon after they asked the journalist to help them make a film.

The imminent arrival of the journalist's child acts as a reflection on his next steps as a father and as an active participant in the world.

Mixing documentary and poetic narrative, we fall into a series of memories, interviews and intimate recollections that open up a perspective of laughter, innocence and resilience in a world commonly seen as horrifying and hopeless.



# SOME OF THE CHARACTERS



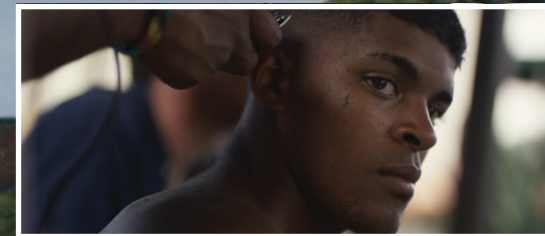
## TALES, 16 years old

Tales remembers being fascinated by drug dealers from a young age. He liked their motorbikes, gold watches and guns. He became a drug dealer because, like he says: “My mind was like that of a child. I saw candy and I wanted to have it”. He was arrested and sent to “Casa do Menor” to be rehabilitated. He’s been there for ten months and he dreams of raising horses.



## JOSUE, 17 years old

Josué is the older and wiser member of the group. He started to use drugs with some friends and became addicted. He’s done many things he’s not proud of but believes in second chances. He’s been in “Casa do Menor” for seventeen months. He dreams of finding a job and live a normal life.



## KLEBER, 15 years old

Kleber doesn’t like to talk much. He likes to laugh and joke around. His eyes are curious and generous and sad. His body shows the marks of a rough life: scars and bullet holes as tattoos of moments he will never forget. He likes photography and dreams of becoming a reporter one day.



## KOLOAMI, 30 years old

Koloami is a child of the street. She grew up in an orphanage of “Casa do Menor” and now works as a social worker trying to help people like her.



## VAGNER, 14 years old

From a young age Vagner has known little else than crime. He began as a drug mule and slowly worked his way into the life of a gangster. He was “marked to die” by the Death squads and had to leave his community. He’s been in “Casa do Menor” for a year and dreams of the times he used to fly kites with his cousins.



## PAULO, 38 years old

Paulo is an independent filmmaker and social worker. He runs a cultural centre in Rio de Janeiro as an after school activity to prevent children from roaming in the streets. He regularly holds filmmaking classes to teach the kids how to make films as a form of therapy.



## A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Don Renato Chiesa is a 72-year-old Italian priest who never resigns and never loses hope. For 41 years he has been operating in the immense and desperate outskirts of the Baixada Fluminense, a suburb North of Rio de Janeiro.

There, in Miguel Couto, he established “Casa do menor” an NGO at the service of the abandoned children of Brazil.

Brazil is one of the most violent countries in the world and a large part of this violence can be linked to the drug trade. In 2018 alone there were some 60,000 murders, nearly double the number of people killed in the drug cartel war in Mexico that year. The vast majority of victims are young, black, male and poor, and often live in the favelas, or slums.

“I was a parish priest in a very violent place” Father Renato says. “A teenager I had sheltered was murdered on the footsteps of my house. Another boy, whose name was the first on the list of ‘marcados para morrer’ (‘marked to die’ by death squads), came to ask me for help. ‘I don’t want to die and nobody does anything’. I felt called to enter into the drama of these children of Brazil. Thus was born the Casa do menor; in a garage in 1986”.

Its goal is to give a family to those who no longer have the opportunity to live in their own, provide support for poor families and make up for the lack of medical assistance.

To this day the NGO has rescued hundreds of thousands of children from the street, prostitution, violence and drugs.







## DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

“Life is simple” Father Renato told me the first time we met. “We like to complicate things with philosophy and theology... but life is simple. All you have to do is love”. And with a warm smile, added: “The difficulty lies in learning how to love”.

I instantly knew I wanted to make a film about Father Renato and his work. Here was a man talking about love as the fundamental ingredient to pacify one of the most violent places on Earth.

He invited me to follow him to Brazil where I discovered a man who dedicates every breath of his life to help the most needy, the most fragile, the “leftovers of humanity”. And does it with great simplicity, by showing them that he cares about them, even if no one else does. He does it with a perennial smile on his face and lots of hugs.

While there I was taken in a rehabilitation centre by the jungle called “Casa Andre” where they bring the most extreme cases - violent drug dealers, murderers and addicts. I was introduced to a group of teenagers. Despite my broken Portuguese we managed to bond. I was attracted and curious about these kids. They were funny and kind and curious and polite. But as we began to talk about their past they all had stories of violence and crime. It was difficult to reconcile the two. All the same, I knew they were the real subjects of my story.

They found out I was a filmmaker and begged me (it did not take them long) to make a film with them. I accepted on the condition they would write and direct and act. I would simply assist as a technical advisor. We made a short film together which I then edited and projected on the dining room wall to ecstatic reactions.

On my return to England, I started thinking about the film I wanted to make. I knew I wanted to make a film about Love as the most sane solution to the eternal question of conflict. I knew my main subjects would be the kids of “Casa Andre” and that I wanted somehow to incorporate the idea of a film within a film. I also knew that I didn’t want to make a journalistic documentary but rather I wanted to aim at something more poetic.

I have long wanted to explore the idea of a documentary told through the eyes of a fictional character. To tell, within a fictional frame, the stories of real people and real situations and allow the subject to open out beyond its confines. DEAR CHILD is my first attempt at doing so.



### ORIGINAL MUSIC BY ZBIGNIEW PREISNER

Zbigniew Preisner is Poland's leading film music composer and is considered to be one of the most outstanding film composers of his generation. For many years Preisner enjoyed a close collaboration with the director Krzysztof Kieslowski. His scores for Kieslowski's films No end, Dekalog, The Double Life Of Veronique, Three Colours Blue, Three Colours White and Three Colours Red have brought him international acclaim.

Among many awards and citations Preisner received the Silver Bear from the Berlin Film Festival in 1997.

He composed an original soundtrack for the film **DEAR CHILD**.









# **TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS**

Eudaimonia Film and Advantage pictures present in association with NUR films and Guiza Produções

## **DEAR CHILD**

with

Josue Ferreira, Odair Tales Bento, Vagner Portela, Willian Sarmento, Jeferson Vidal, David Borges Prata, Kleber da Silva, Ronaldo Aquino, Wesley Miranda, Paulo Sergio de Souza and Paulo Gomes.

PAUL WOODSON, JESSICA CORES and FATHER RENATO CHIERA as himself.

Written and directed by LUCA AMMENDOLA. Produced by: NIKOLAI GALITZINE, HAUKUR M, LUKASZ DLUGOLECKI and MAURO PIZZO. Photography: NICOLAS VILLEGAS. Sound recording: PAWEL SZYGENDORSKI. Original Music: ZBIGNIEW PREISNER. Editing: LUCA AMMENDOLA, NIKOLAI GALITZINE and NIKODEM CHABIOR. Editing supervisor: KAROLINE MOSER. Additional editing: MARIA ARMENGOU. Sound editing and mixing: MARTINS STRAUTNIEKS. Production design: MARCIN BUSKO. Costume design: ROZENNA HARRISON. Camera assistants: CAMILLA FREITAS, ŁUKASZ GRUDZINSKI, LEONARDO FELICIANO. Production manager: CAIO BRETAS. Local coordinator: KELLY DUQUE.

Shot on RED 4K.

Portuguese and English language - subtitles available in all languages.

UK / POLAND / BRAZIL - 76 MINUTES - 2020

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