

# EFA Young Audience Award 2020

Detailed information on the nominated films:

**MY BROTHER CHASES DINOSAURS**

***MIO FRATELLO RINCORRE I DINOSAURI***



## Foreword

This year it is particularly difficult to guess the winner from the three films nominated for the EFA Young Audience Award in advance. The films are of equal quality. As different as they may be in form and content, there are many similarities to be discovered.

All three feature films are debut films by young filmmakers. At least as far as the composition of the characters is concerned, they are based on successful literary models. They deal with the difficulties of growing up, including conflict and longing, as well as struggling with one's parents. The family, no matter its composition, is always a central focus of the stories. Animals play an important secondary role. Two of the films feature dinosaurs, but there are also a giant turtle and a squirrel. Arianna, Tess and Rocca are strong, confident girls, even if two of the three films are told from a boys' perspective. Above all, however, the films are always about very "special" children and young people and stand for the distinctiveness and uniqueness of each individual. And what is perhaps even more important is that they open up new perspectives and unusual views of our world and an optimistic vision of the future.

Everyone sees a film differently, and personal experience also plays a role. This affects all people, regardless of age, including professionals. Some may be unsure what to look out for when making an assessment, others may have already made a decision and even feel patronised by "educational" guidelines. The following guidelines do not claim to name all important aspects of a film in detail. They are only intended as a suggestion. You can, but you don't have to use them, and you certainly don't have to work through them systematically. The main thing is to find your own favourite and to be able to explain to others why you have made this particular choice.

Enjoy the films!



## **MY BROTHER CHASES DINOSAURS**

### ***MIO FRATELLO RINCORRE I DINOSAURI***

Italy, Spain 2019, 102 min.

**Director:** Stefano Cipani

**Performers:** Francesco Ghegi, Lorenzo Sisto, Arianna Becheroni, Alessandro Gassmann, Isabella Ragonese, Rossy De Palma and others

**Recommended** from 10 years of age

**Genre:** Coming of Age film

#### **Content**

Gio, Jack's little brother, has Down's syndrome. Jack has long believed his parents' little lies that Gio is very special and possesses supernatural powers. The admiration for his different brother, who is especially interested in dinosaurs, later gives way to a feeling of shame. When Jack starts high school and meets his first love Arianna, he hides Gio's disability from her and even officially declares him dead without considering the consequences of his behaviour.

#### **About the production**

33-year-old director Stefano Cipani based his debut feature film on the autobiographical novel by Giacomo Mazzariol. The novel was translated into several languages and sold over 300,000 copies.

#### **Topics**

growing up, family, friendship, disability (Down's syndrome), first love, truth and lies, prejudices

#### **Triggers**

Perhaps for people who have a hard time owning their feelings and talking about supposed weaknesses in the family (e.g. illness, disability, poverty, etc.)

**Questions about the film:**

How did you perceive Jack's family? Is it a role model to you?

Can you understand why Jack renounces his brother? Or is his behaviour hard to understand for you?

Do you find the happy end of the film (forgiveness and redemption) coherent, or does it seem contrived?

What did you take from the film personally, or for your everyday life?

How well did the film manage to dissolve prejudices against people with Down's syndrome and to show that not everything is as it seems at first glance?

## FILM-ANALYSIS:

### *Main topics*

#### **Family cohesion**

Every time there is something important to talk about in Jack's family, they go to the carpark of a shopping mall after closing time, since that's where his parents first met. This happens at the beginning of the film to announce the arrival of a new family member and towards the end, for the reconciliation with Jack. They are an exemplary family in which all important decisions are made together, everyone is there for one another, and the parents show understanding for their children and fully support them on their way into adulthood. The real events underlying the book and the film only took place one decade ago. The film's credits even include original footage of Mazzariol's family. In contrast, many of the films produced today for a young audience deal with patchwork families and portray unsympathetic parents, absent fathers or sick mothers.



#### **Living with disabled people (Down's syndrome)**

In a model family in which even the aunt can talk to her nephew about almost everything, a disabled child is in particularly good hands - a stroke of luck, also for the other family members, as the film suggests. Gio has Down's syndrome, which is not an illness. It is a mental and physical disability caused by a "wrong" cell division process before birth. Since chromosome 21 is present in triplicate rather than duplicate as a carrier of genetic information, it is also called trisomy 21. The syndrome, which was first described in detail in 1866 by British doctor and pharmacist John Langdon Down, was originally called "mongoloid idiocy". Today the term is no longer used, as it sounds pejorative and racist. In the statements of an arrogant work colleague of Gio's father, the film nevertheless refers to this term verbally to reveal his prejudices. Many parents of children with Down's syndrome and also Giacomo Mazzariol report how much their lives have been enriched by the special social skills of these children.

#### **Shadows of the past**

A gynaecologist points out that a prenatal examination can now determine whether a foetus has trisomy 21. Gio's parents never even thought about that option, and a possible abortion is ethically controversial. The Nazis in the "Third Reich" considered people with Down's syndrome "unworthy of life" and murdered them. The film alludes to this historical background when Jack tries to free himself from his web of lies and scapegoats some neo-Nazis. In contrast, Gio later expresses his unwavering love for his brother with a painted swastika on his t-shirt. Whether

this is done intuitively or on purpose is not revealed in the film. But you shouldn't underestimate people with Down's syndrome.

### **Truth or lie?**

Jack has to make important experiences and go through a personal crisis until he can stand by Gio without reservation. Maybe he was just disappointed at first to have misunderstood his parents' remarks that his brother was something "special". Gio does not have superpowers. The everyday concern for his brother, who is dependent on outside help, then changes his relationship with Gio. When he starts high school, he chooses an unfamiliar city to escape the daily burden. While Gio always expresses his emotions directly, Jack increasingly has problems to stand by his own feelings. This becomes his downfall when he falls in love with Arianna and believes his brother could cast a bad light on him. Already his first lie starts an avalanche that can't be stopped anymore. First, he doesn't have a brother at all. Then he declares him dead. And finally he deletes the data on his brother's YouTube channel and accuses neo-Nazis of this heinous act.

Who has not experienced how difficult it can be to tell the truth to your loved ones? Jack's parents have avoided telling the truth with no ill intentions, and Jack doesn't dare to tell it to Arianna. Being truthful is especially difficult when it could entail perceived disadvantages. This is what the story of Jack and his brother is about. At the same time it makes clear that people deserve a second chance, and that forgiveness is possible. Only Gio does not have to deal with such problems. He is always direct and sincere, and that alone makes him a very special person.

### ***Filmic realisation / film language***

#### **Two development stories**

An off-screen narrator, which can be attributed to the now grown-up Jack or the author Giacomo Mazzariol, looks back on the story of his own family. He tells about the difficulties of growing up under the special conditions of having a disabled family member. Although Jack's experiences are the focus of attention, it is also the story of his brother Gio. Gio constantly refuses to do what Jack hopes or expects him to do. In this way, Jack and Gio are on an equal footing, with their sisters playing rather minor roles.

#### **The passing of time**

The literary adaptation covers a period of over 14 years, from Gio's imminent birth to the YouTube video that makes the brothers internationally famous. For this reason, different actors had to be found for the two main roles, and two leaps in time had to be incorporated by means of montage. Gio himself appears for the first time on his fourth birthday. The second leap in time takes place shortly after in front of his brother's drums, who is then 14 years old. Gio's development is highlighted by a changed camera perspective. While Jack still looks down on the four-year-old, the two later meet at eye level.



### **Who am I?**

Gio has long since found his permanent place inside the family, and Jack is in danger of losing his family roots in search of a suitable identity for himself. Visually, the film underlines this search with mirror images in which Jack faces himself self-critically. At first, he hopes to become a different person with a cool new outfit with the help of Aunt Dolores. His almost desperate look in the mirror after writing a threatening letter to Gio reveals his inner conflict. His new outfit, a hat and a leather jacket, becomes a pure facade.



### **Changed perception**

Not only does Jack question himself during the course of the movie, but also we as viewers are encouraged to see our own ideas of people with Down's syndrome with "different eyes". Gio, for example, is deliberately never shown as a baby. When his family bends over him and describes him, the rest is left to our imagination. The extent to which Jack has succumbed to his own prejudices and his associated fears for Gio becomes clear from his brother's drawing on the subject of war. At first Jack only sees a girl with an ice cream cone, but then, as he does with his brother's musical and visual freestyle, he finds a completely different approach when he learns that the girl is sad and consoles herself with ice cream because her boyfriend had to go to war.

## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE FILMS BEFORE THE VOTE

The following questionnaire is intended as a guideline and a reminder in case you are unsure by which criteria to judge a film, and which aspects should be considered. However, it is entirely up to you whether you want to use this questionnaire or proceed in a completely different way in order to make a decision for the film of your choice. The main thing is that you can justify your decision and stand by it.

*What do you think are the most important themes of the film?*

*What surprised you most about the film (characters, scenes, actions ...)?*

*Does the film succeed in breaking with common stereotypes and prejudices? Which ones in particular?*

*Does the film tell a universal story that could also take place elsewhere?  
Or is it a story that is inseparably linked to a specific country or region?*

*How realistic and authentic do the main characters of the film seem to you?  
In other words: do you believe what they say, think, feel and do?*

*How are the adults (not only the parents) represented in the film? Can they be role models, especially with regard to their behaviour towards their children?*

*Did you like the (special) humour of the film?*

*Was the film exciting, or were many of the events predictable for you?*

*What role did the landscape (nature or urban environment) play in the film?*

*Which scene of the film touched you most?*

*Were there also scenes that you found were less well done, that were inappropriate or illogical?*

*What stood out to you most about the filmic realisation (e.g. camera work, colour palette, lighting, music, special effects...)?*

*For which target and age group is the film best suited?*

*Why should this particular film receive the EFA Young Audience Award?*

*Further comments:*

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