



# My Giraffe

A FILM BY  
BARBARA BREDERO



## Press Kit



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# SYNOPSIS

Patterson was born on the same day as his best friend Raf, a giraffe. Because his grandfather is a zookeeper Patterson gets to spend a lot of time with Raf. They're inseparable and share everything. That is, until Patterson goes to school for the first time and finds out that giraffes aren't allowed at school. Patterson misses Raf a lot, but also experiences many exciting new things. He even makes a new friend: Yous. Raf misses Patterson too and really wants to go to school with him. So, Patterson devises a plan to bring the giraffe to school and unite his two best friends.



# MY GIRAFFE IS BASED ON THE FAMOUS VERSE BY ANNIE M.G.SCHMIDT.

## Cast

Patterson	Liam de Vries
Father	Egbert Jan Weeber
Mother	Medi Broekman
Grandpa	Martijn Fischer
Teacher	Dolores Leeuwin
Voice Raf	Yannick van de Velde

## Crew

Director	Barbara Bredero
Script	Mirjam Oomkes and Laura Weeda
DOP	Coen Stroeve (NSC)
Animatronic Giraffe	Rob's Prop Shop Rob Hillenbrink Erik Hillenbrink
Editor	David Verdurme, Michiel Reichwein (NCE)
Production Design	Florian Legters
Sound Design	Tina Laschke
Re-recording mixer	Adrian Baumeister
Composer	Herman Witkam
Costume Design	Monica Petit
Hair & Make-Up	Liselotte Bredero
Producers	Lemming Film: Erik Glijnis, Eva Eisenloeffel, Fleur Winters, Leontine Petit
Co-Producers	A Private View, Hamster Film, KRO-NCRV

## This film is supported by:

The Nederland Filmfund, The Netherlands Film Production Incentive, KRO-NCRV, CoBO, Eurimages, het Vlaams Audiovisueel Fonds (VAF), Tax Shelter maatregel van de Belgische Federale Overheid, Casa Kafka Pictures, Isabelle Molhant, Casa Kafka Pictures Movie Tax Shelter empowered by Belfius Norddeutscher Rundfunk, Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig Holstein, the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, Attraction Distribution

## TECHNICAL SPECS

Shooting Format:	ARRI 3,2K	Duration:	74 minuten
Screening Format:	DCP 2K	Original Language:	Dutch
Aspect Ratio:	SCOPE	Subtitling:	English
Sound:	5.1 surround		

# ABOUT ANNIE M.G. SCHMIDT

The most famous twentieth-century Dutch writer, Annie M.G. Schmidt was thought of during her lifetime as the “real queen of the Netherlands”. She was a highly original woman with a broad perspective and an unflinching sense of humor. Her radio and TV series, plays and musicals brought her unprecedented popularity. Many of her books have been filmed, and almost everyone in the Netherlands is able to recite at least a line or two from one of her songs or poems. Her children’s books have become a national institution.

Filmed books by Annie M.G. Schmidt are: ABEL, THE FLYING LIFTBOY (1998), OTJE (1998), MINOES (2001), YES NURSE, NO NURSE (2002), IBBELTJE (2004) and WIPLALA (2014).

Throughout her career – she died in 1995 at the age of 84 – she was showered with accolades, including the Dutch and Austrian national prizes for children’s literature. Her work has appeared in translation all over the world. In 1988 the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren presented her with the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the “Nobel Prize” of children’s literature. The jury praised her “ironic tone, witty criticism and style that is amusing, clear, rebellious and simple to its essence.”

## ABOUT THE ORIGINAL VERSE ‘PETTERSON PEPPS’

**PETTERSON PEPPS** (Dutch: ‘DIKKERTJE DAP’) is a verse from Annie M.G. Schmidt from 1950. It appeared for the first time in the collection *The Flute Kettle and other verses* (1950). The poem is her most famous and popular verse. The music is from Paul Christiaan van Westering.

The poem is about a little boy, Petterson Pepps (Dikkertje Dap), who goes to the zoo with a long stairway to talk to the giraffe. He tells the animal of everything and then asks him if he can slide off his neck. The giraffe allows this, and the boy slides off the animal and then ends up with a taste on the ground.

In 2007, Petterson Peps (Dikkertje Dap) was selected by the Dutch public to the most beloved verse by Annie M.G. Schmidt. The verse was recorded several times between 1951 and 1991 and released as single by children’s choirs, but also bands and singers. One band (VOF de Kunst) even scored a hit with the song in the Dutch and Belgian hitparades.

# PATTERSON PEPPS - the verse

Patterson Pepps climbed up the steps  
with a sugar cube from the table  
and the giraffe came out of his stable.  
"Hi, Giraffe," said Patterson Pepps.  
"D'you know what Mummy gave me?  
Bright red boots for when it's rainy!"  
"Can it be true?" said the giraffe.  
"Patterson, Patterson, what a laugh."

"Oh Giraffe," said Patterson Pepps.  
"I've got lots more I can tell you.  
There's three letters I can spell too:  
a b c – that's clever of me!  
And I can almost tie my laces!  
And I can draw all kinds of faces!"  
"Goodness me," said the giraffe,  
"boy, oh boy, that's not by halves."

"Hey Giraffe," said Patterson Pepps,  
"do you think I could try riding  
on your neck and then try sliding?  
Just once to see, if you'll let me.  
Sliding down onto the zoo floor  
shouldn't make my bottom too sore."  
"Climb on up," said the giraffe.  
"Climb on up but don't be rough."

Patterson Pepps climbed off the steps  
with a scare, great big step.  
On the neck of the giraffe,  
little Patterson Pepps pushed off.  
Whoosh and with a mighty wail  
he went whizzing to the tail.  
BANG!  
OW!!  
"Bye, Giraffe." said Patterson Pepps.  
"Monday I'll be back here with my steps."

Annie M.G. Schmidt (1950)  
Translation David Colmer  
(A pond full of ink, ISBN 9789045112909)  
Music Paul Christiaan van Westering (1959)



## Director's Statement by BARBARA BREDERO

I'm extremely proud that we made the verse 'Patterson Pepps' – Dutch cultural heritage – into a film. Generations have grown up with this verse and we've connected a universal theme to it; going to school for the first time.

**MY GIRAFFE** has become a feel-good film for the entire family. For all children who are about to take that big step towards school. For all children who have taken that step already. For all parents that need to learn how to let go of their children as they take their own steps into the big world.

The change towards his schoolyears stretches the umbilical cord between Patterson, his parents and his friend Raf. Patterson is really looking forward to this step. He exchanges, with natural curiosity and enthusiasm, the warm womb for the big school.

But what about the world he's leaving behind? His classmate You symbolises learning new stuff, while Raf symbolises his old life with his animal friends. But how are you supposed to combine the two? By experiencing this small struggle with Patterson, all young children will gain perspective on how to deal with the new situations that come with growth and learning new things. The audience learns that learning is fun. It's sort of like playing that'll make you grow. And who doesn't want that!

The tone and atmosphere of Annie M.G. Schmidt verses and stories inspired me, along with the script by Mirjam and Laura, to use a light, comic and subtle way to give perspective to dealing with things that are suddenly different and that take a little time to grow into. The tone of the film is open and not pushy; an atmosphere I personally thrive in and that works great when directing a young cast.

Patterson's world is a world full of colour and diversity. Every viewer can identify with one of the characters in the film. The cast is diverse in age too: from young and inexperienced to adult and experienced. To me, directing children means invoking an authentic source within them. Children don't have baggage yet, so you really have to search for a way in. Very often it's their first experience with acting on a set and they find it hard to imagine the dramatic arc of a shooting day, which makes the work intense for both parties. That's why I choose a child I feel compassionate towards. Who gives me energy. If I'm allowed to 'go and look inside them', then everyone in the cinema will be able to see. I'm therefore extremely pleased with the choice of Liam, who realized that in every way.

The first time I walked into Rob and Erik Hillenbrink's workshop I immediately fell in love with Raf, the giraffe. As soon as he moves he comes to life. It's an astonishing result: with the help of 140 servomotors the giraffe suddenly has a soul. Bringing lifeless materials to life on screen was one of the most fun and biggest challenges ever, and it feels like a true triumph over myself. You can physically touch Raf, sit on him and lean against him, and thanks to Rob's voice and movements the giraffe already came to life on set, which really helped the actors with their acting. But Raf's voice was perhaps the biggest challenge of all. Because how does a four-year-old giraffe talk? The engaging voice of Yannick van de Velde was what we needed to find a convincing friend for Patterson.

## Scriptwriters **MIRJAM OOMKES** and **LAURA WEEDA** about the origin of the story

**Mirjam:** "For me the song 'Patterson Pepps' became a staple when I had a child of my own. The more I heard it, the more I started liking the lyrics. 'Petterson Pepps' ('Dikkertje Dap'). It's a strange Dutch name really, as he doesn't seem very fat (which is what 'dik' means). He climbs effortlessly up the ladder and slides – whoosh – down the giraffe's neck. An adventurous little lad, who's busy exploring the world. The enthusiastic way with which he recounts his experiences is contagious. You'd almost run to the store to buy your own red wellies. Writer Annie M.G. Schmidt conjures up a lot in this verse with very few words: a character, an atmosphere and a world around it.

That's how the idea of a film about 'Petterson Pepps' was born. After two films for older children I really wanted to make one for younger children. It asks for an entirely different approach: there's not just a difference in the themes and subjects you can discuss, but also in the dramatic arc. The attention span of toddlers and pre-schoolers is much shorter. The little ones need a 'break' every now and then so they can process the information. Also, it's important that the story is recognisable to them, but that it allows them to use their imagination as well.

Laura Weeda (co-writer) had experience with writing stories and had exactly the wilfulness that suited this project. We knew each other from the Editing degree at the University of Amsterdam. Laura and I approached producer Lemming Film together, because they had experience with live action films for young children from productions such as *Frogs & Toads*. Lemming Film guided us in the development of the project and that's how it, along with the help of scriptcoach Mieke de Jong (Mr. Frog, Bonkers), started to take shape."

**Laura:** “In the film **MY GIRAFFE** we learn that growing up and going to school doesn’t mean you have to give up your old, more playful world. On the contrary; Patterson learns how to connect his two worlds: the playful world with Raf and the world of school. Friendship is a very important theme in this. How do you stay true to an old friend? How do you explore the world with a new friend? And how do you connect the two? This message isn’t literally present in the film, but was our main guide while writing.

Of course, we tried to learn where the name ‘Petterson Pepps’ (Dikkertje Dap) originated from. Even Flip van Duijn, Annie M.G. Schmidt’s son, didn’t know. It could be related to Annie’s husband, as his name was Dick, but that’s an unproven theory. In any case, we had a lot of fun working on the shape of ‘Petterson Pepps’ and his surroundings on paper. Barbara Bredero made beautiful, clear images for it. We hope it has made My Giraffe into a beautiful, timeless film that all toddlers and pre-schoolers can enjoy for years to come.”

## **Interview with ROB HILLENBRINK and ERIK HILLENBRINK of ROB’S PROPSHOP**

### **How did building the giraffe go?**

Building the giraffe was quite an endeavour. I think this was the biggest item we’ve every built. I could see it when we were building the moulds: there seemed to be no end.

### **How did you manage to make it so realistic?**

Google is your best friend. We did a lot of research online; viewed many videos and photos. I also visited a friend who does taxidermy, which is where I researched the skin and texture. We measured a lot too, to see what the exact length was. Furthermore, we really studied the core movements of a giraffe through videos.

### **Did you use any special materials to make the giraffe?**

The skin, because it’s really difficult to get realistic faux fur. There’s a manufacturer in the US who makes fur. You can make clear for which animal and at what length you need the fur and they’ll then make it on a stretch foundation. Of course, that’s very important when you’re using it on an animatronic. We eventually got the skin in white and then added the spots and everything else ourselves.

### **How much time goes into making a giraffe like this?**

It depends. We were involved from a very early stage, which means we also wrote pieces for the funding application. But from the definite ‘go’ to the final shoot it took us about three months.

### **What puzzled you most of all?**

The framework was quite intense to make, because the giraffe hangs on the front of a cart. This was difficult to make when it came to the distribution of force and stability. We spent quite a few nights working on this. It was really cool as well, because we got to collaborate with all kinds of colleagues throughout Europe, like an English guy who made all the controls (the operating mechanism). He usually makes the control units for Star Wars. So, in a way, we've got a control unit from Star Wars controlling the giraffe!

### **How did the real giraffes in the zoo respond to 'Raf'?**

That was actually quite funny. The giraffe enclosure has fairly thin windows. When we entered the enclosure and walked past the windows, you could see the real giraffes inside look up and press themselves against the windows. It was like they were thinking: "What...? You get to go outside and we have to stay inside?".

# **BIOGRAPHIES**

## **BARBARA BREDERO - DIRECTOR**

Barbara Bredero (Drunen, 1962) worked with people such as Heddy Honigmann, Theo van Gogh, Rita Horst, Ruud van Hemert and Johan Nijenhuis. She started out directing series like MEIDEN VAN DE WIT, WESTENWIND, FLOOR FABER and HET KLOKHUIS. She was creative director of the daily TV series VRIJLAND and in Suriname she directed the Dutch-Suriname TV series SAMMY PARAMARIBO. Her first short film LIEFS UIT DE LINNAEUSSTRAAT, an ode to Theo van Gogh, appeared in 2005. In 2008, her feature film debut MORRISON GETS A BABY SISTER appears. Following that, Bredero directed the three highly successful feature films in the MISTER TWISTER series. All three MISTER TWISTER films reached 600.000 visitors. She won national and international awards with her feature films, which included both audience and jury awards.

The director has the skill to present serious themes in a light-hearted way. She believes this to be a condition: "Whether it concerns children, adults or giraffes, you have to have goose bumps and perspective".

## **MIRJAM OOMKES - SCRIPT**

Mirjam Oomkes (Naarden, 1979) was already writing stories at a young age, like for VPRO Radio. She studied Film and Television Studies at the University of Amsterdam

and completed the Screenwriting degree at the Netherlands Film Academy. After writing two TV Movies she made her debut in 2012 with the family film MIKE SAYS GOODBYE! (original script in collaboration with Willemine van de Wiel). Next followed the novel adaptations THE ESCAPE (with Olga Ponjee) and ENOUGH! (with Maria Peters). For MY GIRAFFE Mirjam Oomkes and Laura Weeda created a story based on the popular verse by Annie M.G. Schmidt. The friendship between the young Patterson and the giraffe was the basis for this story.

### **LAURA WEEDA - SCRIPT**

Laura Weeda (Amsterdam, 1976) is a writer, editor and translator. She met Mirjam Oomes during her master's degree in Editing at the University of Amsterdam. Years later, at the presentation of the book Van Abeltje tot Zoop (about the history of the Dutch children's film) on which she contributed, Mirjam asked her to co-write the script for Patterson Pepps. This was her first venture into the world of film. Previously, she wrote, among others, columns that were bundled under the name Jong en Gelukkig. She currently works for publications such as 360 Magazine and De Correspondent.

### **LIAM DE VRIES is Patterson**

Liam de Vries (2009) made his debut as an actor in the leading role of Patterson Pepps (Dikkertje Dap) in the film My Giraffe (2017). Liam is always happy and cheerful. He's currently in Year five and likes being the class clown. He'd sleep with his football if he could. Liam dreams of becoming an actor or a professional footballer. His biggest wish is therefore to play a professional footballer in a film.

### **MARTIJN FISCHER is GRANDPA**

Martijn Fischer (1968) graduated as an actor from the University of the Arts Utrecht in 1997. After his studies, he worked at several theatre companies, such as the Dutch 'RO Theater' and 'Nationaal Toneel'. In 2013, he sang during the coronation on Museum Square in Amsterdam and performed at the Ziggo Dome during four sold-out concerts of Holland sings Hazes. In 2013, he received the John Kraaijkamp Musical Award for best male lead for his role in HIJ GELOOFT IN MIJ (musical about André Hazes). For his role as André Hazes in the film BLOOD, SWEAT & TEARS he won a Golden Calf Award. Lately he appeared in TV series such as VECHTERS HART and PETTICOAT, and in films like SKIRT DAY and BOYS WILL BE BOYS.

### **EGBERT-JAN WEEBER is FATHER**

Egbert-Jan Weeber (1981) made his first appearance in the BNN series FINALS in 2000. A year later he got his first leading role in the TV Movie UITGESLOTEN. He was nominated for a Golden Calf. After big parts in movies such as OYSTERS AT NAM

KEE'S, BACKSLIDE, BOLLYWOOD HERO, SAINT, FIDGETY BRAM, HEART STREET and through the spectacular production ADMIRAL, he won his place in the elite of Holland. On TV, we know Egbert-Jan from BLOEDVERWANTEN and several seasons of VERBORGEN GEBREKEN, as well as his brilliant performance in MOTHER, I WANT TO JOIN THE CABARET. Egbert-Jan also played in SUNNY SIDE UP, IF THE SUN EXPLODES and the TV Movie SEASIDE WALKING. This year he will appear in the films MY GIRAFFE and BELLA DONNAS.

### **MEDI BROEKMAN is MOTHER**

Medi Broekman (1981) made her debut at an early age in the feature film CROSSING BORDERS by Rosemarie Blanc. Medi appeared in TV movies such as TEER by Sacha Polak and OVER by Michiel Rummens. She played one of the leading roles in the drama series STELLENBOSCH by Michiel van Jaarsveld and had a big role in the TV Movie UITGESLOTEN by Mijke de Jong. Medi played in series such as DOCTOR TINUS, DANNI LOWINSKI, DETECTIVE RIA, LEVENSLIED, FLIKKEN MAASTRICHT, EVERYBODY LOVES JACK and RUSSEN. Medi appeared on the big screen in the feature films SIMON, IN YOUR NAME and ZURICH. Recently, Media played in the romantic comedy A TUSCAN WEDDING.

### **DOLORES LEEUWIN is TEACHER NELLIE**

Dolores Leeuwin (1970) started as a presenter of HET KLOKHUIS in 2001, which she presented until the end of 2015. From Het Klokhuis she started taking steps towards other programs as well, such as KNOOP IN JE ZAKDOEK and HOE?ZO!. In 2014, she made her acting debut in the film WITCHES DON'T EXIST. That same year she also played a role in Z@PPMISSIE. Recently, she started her own YouTube channel called DOLORES LEEUWIN: WIE BEN JIJ DAN? in which she goes out onto the streets to interview various adolescents to find out who they are and what motivates them.

### **YANNICK VAN DE VELDE is the voice of RAF**

Yannick van de Velde (1980) played in TV series SPANGEN and ICE, after which he got a part in the succesful feature film LITTLE CRUMB by Maria Peters. Following that, he played the leading role in the feature film IN ORANGE by Joram Lürsen. This part won Yannick the prestigious Young Artist Award for 'Best Young Actor' in a foreign film, which was awarded to him in Hollywood. That same year he played in the film FLORIS and in 2008 he got the leading role in the adaption of THE LETTER FOR THE KING. Afterwards, he appeared in the feature films THE PRICE OF SUGAR, HOW TO AVOID EVERYTHING, HOMIES, WASTED and ADIOS AMIGOS. Since 2016 he is, together with Tom van Kalmthout, the creative brain behind and actor in the TV series RUNDUNK.



# ABOUT THE PRODUCER

Established in 1995 and located in Amsterdam, Lemming Film is a Dutch production company that produces quality commercial films and television series. Lemming Film originally specialises in fiction for children, teenagers and families. In recent years, they have also started focussing on international arthouse films and series for adults.

Films such as FROGS & TOADS, LEPEL and EEP! received critical acclaim and commercial success.

Many Lemming productions are shown at prestigious international festivals across the globe. DUNYA & DESI represented the Netherlands in the race for Best Foreign Language Film of the Academy Awards 2008. Furthermore, in recent years seven feature films were part of the Berlinale Generation competition, including TAKING CHANCES and A CHIRSTMOOSE STORY.

## International Sales

**Attraction Distribution**

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