

The Guardian Virtual Reality

SONGBIRD: a virtual moment of extinction

Director:

Lucy Greenwell

Art and Animation Directors:

Michelle & Uri Kranot

Producers:

Anetta Jones/ The Guardian

Lana Tankosa Nikolic/ Late love production

Duration: approx. 9 mins.

Made for HTC Vive



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Logline

Songbird: a virtual moment of extinction

Synopsis

Songbird is a fairytale with a dark heart. You will be transported to the island of Kauai in 1984 and into a painted replica of a lush cloud forest filled with colourful birds. Here, you are invited to search for the last known 'ō'ō, an iconic black bird with yellow leg feathers and a beautiful song, a bird whose existence has been threatened to the point of extinction.

You are retracing the steps of world renowned ornithologist Dr Jim Jacobi, one of the last known people to ever see the 'ō'ō bird. You will hear the true story of his extraordinary meeting with the fabled 'ō'ō. Jim's past experience and your present begin to merge as you first hear and then see the 'ō'ō, culminating in a final close encounter with the legendary 'ō'ō himself.

In the piece, the 'ō'ō is 3D animated, and other birds such as the i'iwi and the kamao are 2D animated. The cloud forest itself is comprised of 2D and 3D painted assets, each and every leaf and plant meticulously researched. The painted artwork and animation was created by Uri and Michelle Kranot who have been honoured with the top industry awards for their work, including the Oscar Academy Award Shortlist.

Songbird has been created with a fully spatialised soundscape of recordings of extinct birds - sonic fossils - combined with authentic sounds from the Kauai'an wet forest. The 'ō'ō recording in the piece was recorded in 1976. The 'ō'ō was declared extinct in 1987.

The 'ō'ō is not alone; over half of the Kauai's original 13 native forest birds have disappeared. Kauai is not alone either; globally 1 in 8 birds are threatened with extinction.

Veteran British actress Sian Phillips narrates Songbird.

Hawaii is the extinct bird capital of the world. Many native birds are endangered, but for some it's too late. The fabled 'ō'ō (songbird) was last seen in 1985. Set amid the cloud forest of Kauai, Songbird takes you back in time to meet the legendary species and hear its last song.

Key Credits:

Director: **Lucy Greenwell**

Art Directors & animation: **Michelle & Uri Kranot**

Producer: **Anetta Jones**

Executive producer: **Francesca Panetta**

Co-producer: **Lana Tankosa Nikolic/ Late love production**

Installation design: **Sara Topsøe-Jensen, Sarah John**

Supported by: **The Animation Workshop, Carte Blanche Theater**

Creative technologist: **Federico Fasce**

VR designer: **Morten Andersen**

3D animation: **Philip Piaget**

2D animation: **Denis Chapon**

Animation production: **Lana Tankosa Nikolic**

Sound design & music: **Henrik Opperman**

Story concept & research: **Andreas von Bubnoff**

Scriptwriter: Gemma Seltzer Narrated by: **Dame Sian Phillips** Featuring: **Dr Jim Jacobi**

Lucy Greenwell - Director

Lucy is an audio producer focusing on narrative and storytelling. She has made features and documentaries for BBC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 Live and the World Service, including the award-winning Jon Ronson On... for BBC Radio 4. At the Guardian she made the Sony nominated series on walks in London, and worked on the Keep it in the Ground campaign and audio series. More recently she was senior producer for The Butterfly Effect, a chart topping nonfiction audio series for Audible presented by Jon Ronson. She founded Lives on Record, a venture recording life stories in not-for-broadcast interviews. Songbird is her first VR piece.

Michelle & Uri Kranot - Art and Animation Directors

Beginning their career in animation, Michelle and Uri Kranots' work has expanded beyond the traditional: their art straddles experimental genres and unfamiliar mediums, fusing handmade crafted images and new technologies into contemporary experiences. Their current work continues to test the frontiers of immersive art and moving images. The Kranots are the founders of [TinDrum](#), an animation production company and the producers and creative directors of [ANIDOX](#), focused on development and production of animated documentaries. Part of [The Animation Workshop in](#) Viborg Denmark, where they hold various key positions. The Kranots first gained recognition with films such as [Black Tape](#), [Hollow Land](#), [How Long, Not Long and](#) most recently, the VR film installation [Nothing Happens](#). They have been honored with the top industry awards for their work, including the Fipresci Prize at Annecy International Animation Film Festival, The Oscar® Academy Award Shortlist and the Danish Statens Kunstfond award for the performing arts. In recent years, the Kranots have focused on collaborative projects using cross-media innovations to enhance emotional human storytelling, exposing the depth and beauty in the things – physical and intangible – that connect us all.

