



[CG GARAGE PODCAST #255 | PEDRO CONTI](#)

[DIRECTOR, FLOOUL ANIMATION](#)

From Sao Paolo to Los Angeles: How music and animation have helped CG Artist and Director Pedro Conti get through tough times and find his heart.

Hailing from Sao Paolo, Brazil, Pedro Conti has created some truly impressive work. As well as contributing to Disney's Moana as a VFX artist, he created hilarious short "One More Beer," and directed the touching music video for Ron Artis II's song "In My Heart." But it hasn't always been smooth sailing for Pedro — this sensitive soul has faced some challenging moments.

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Chris: How many THUs for you?

Pedro: I guess it's five THUs?

Chris: Five, okay, what was your first one?

Pedro: The first one I came here in ... I guess 2013?

Chris: Okay, all right. I came to the second one but I haven't missed one since then, so.

Pedro: Whoa, yeah.

Chris: So it's pretty good.

Pedro: And I missed two or three years and then, because I went to live abroad and then had a baby-

Chris: I know. A lot of stuff has happened to you. So let's see, when you did your first THU, what was going on?

Pedro: Well I was in this company that I was partner of called Techno Image and I finished a personal short film called "One More Beer."

Chris: Yeah, and I remember that one, that was really.

Pedro: Yeah. So Andre, I was in touch with Andre even before the THU. He was like, "Hey, Pedro, want you to come here to Portugal for a workshop."

Chris: Okay.

Pedro: Because he was running a school at the time and then he had told me, "Hey, wait. It's not going to happen but I'm working on a festival called Trojan Horse was a Unicorn.

Chris: Right.

Pedro: I was like, "What?"

Chris: That's kind of a strange name.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And when we got there we didn't know what to expect, no one was expecting ... We didn't know, really. And when we got there all

these big cars with Trojan Horse logo and then we got to Troia, it was like, "Whoa." That was insane.

Chris: It was, it was a pretty cool thing but it's interesting. I went to your talk and it was a very emotional talk. It was really good.

Pedro: So much drama.

Chris: There was a lot of drama and a lot of very personal stories that's, I think, as a veteran of THU you know that it's okay to let your heart out. And to do that, I don't think anyone had a dry eye over there, so it was a great ... I was really, really interested to hear your story. If you don't mind can you share some of that story with us?

Pedro: Yeah, sure, sure, sure.

Chris: Yeah, so how did it start for you? You were talking about you being a kid, you grew up in Sao Paulo, right?

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, Sao Paulo.

Chris: Yeah?

Pedro: So, yeah. Grow up in Sao Paulo, right in the edge. Brazil has so much contrast, it being rich and poor. And I was right in the ... I wasn't really poor but we didn't have much. And I was living a small neighborhood and yeah, life was all about playing with friends and I hated school. Really hated school and my mother had to work a lot. My father and mother, they were divorced, so my mother was working pretty much all the time and I was going to school and going back home and sometimes I had someone taking care of us but sometimes we were just playing with people in the street.

And the cool thing, the street I used to live, everyone knew each other. So my friends' mother was looking for us and everyone was looking ... Each other. We grew up like a big family, the whole street was a-

Chris: The neighborhood, yeah.

Pedro: Yeah, the neighborhood.

Chris: That's nice. So when you were growing up and you're doing the street and then basically you said you didn't like school and you'd have to try something that interested you.

Pedro: Yeah. Well, it was hard for me. I couldn't ... I feel like the school wasn't interesting. All the time I was struggling there and eventually ... Like, for me, the most cool part was playing with friends. Like skateboarding was a thing. Playing soccer. And eventually in that school I was studying at the time I was introduced to music so I started to playing flute and then I went for trumpet. And after you get to know music, because where I'm from the people are very simple there so they don't know a lot about art. You don't hear people talking about those kinds of stuff so when I started learning music was just expanded my world.

And eventually the time I was suspended skateboarding or doing whatever I started playing. I bothered so much my brothers because imagine the trumpet-

Chris: In your house, yeah. It's pretty loud.

Pedro: Pretty loud. So yeah, that was the thing. And then I started to go for music school in Sao Paulo and I was maybe around ten, 11 years old but it was one hour by bus and subway and walk. And it's a kind of dangerous city, you choose to be walking around with ten years old. But it's something like ... I felt like for doing what I want to do I really had to fight for it since I was a kid.

So, yeah. That's how I really started. But the way I was introduced to music in that school because it was like more orchestra music, so it's very rigid. And all the kids there, they had a music background so they used to study music while they were very, very young. So I was the only one that was there and didn't have any real music background. So I didn't know any theory but I had this feeling. I had this feeling and for going to this music you have to do a test to be approved or not. And I got the first place to go to this test because they felt like I had the feeling for this thing.

But when I got there they just tried to put me in that box and they wanted me to know stuff that I didn't know and if I told them I didn't know they were like, "Oh, you don't know it? Everybody knows it!" Treating me like ... It was very harsh.

Chris: Yeah, that doesn't sound nice at all.

Pedro: So I was starting to ... I wasn't enjoying it anymore, to do music. The stuff that I was doing that I was happy doing by some people treating me that way I was like, "Oh, man, I don't know if I like this. I don't know if that's for me."

So eventually I stopped going for the music school and going to my aunt's house and my mother didn't know about it. And after maybe three, four months on that my mother went to pick me up on the music school because she left work earlier and the teacher said, "Hey, I don't see Pedro maybe in three, four months."

Chris: Right. So you got a little bit in trouble.

Pedro: Yeah, I got a little bit in trouble, man. But I was lucky, my aunt was on my back and was like, "Oh, the boy was here with me and ... "

Chris: Right, yeah. So what got you to start thinking about doing 3D stuff?

Pedro: Yeah. So yeah, after the music thing I went to high school and got the chance to meet some friends that was drawing. They were very good and I got inspired to do art again like I was doing with music. I had no background at all and, yeah, I started drawing and this friend, he told me after high school that he was going to do design so I joined the graphic design university and I went to work with my father, too.

Pedro: And my father used to do a lot, a lot of stuff with computers like PowerPoints and videos and After Effects, and one day he showed me 3D but he used the 3D for very basic stuff like logos, turning logos.

And then I kind of ... I said, "Look, that's really cool, that's really cool." And there's this thing, I was walking on the street and in Brazil by that time we had a lot of people selling illegal-

Chris: Yeah, pirated software.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Chris: Just on the street, right?

Pedro: Yeah, on the street. And this guy was walking by and he told me, "Hey, Pedro, do you want to buy any software," no. He didn't say Pedro, he didn't know my name. And yeah, he just told me, "There's this software called Maya and they made Shrek with that." I was like, "Whoa."

I didn't buy because I didn't have money but I started looking to that. It's possible to make movies with the software you have in your house. So yeah, that's how I started to know about it and then I knew a guy in the university that was doing 3D animation and the world started to expand

and then I used Google and I was like, "Whoa! There's a whole new world there."

So CGSociety was huge back in 2005, '6. So that for me was how I started with 3D and doing small things.

Chris: And then you eventually just learned the software on your own, right? You're self taught on all this stuff.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

New beginnings

Chris: So how did you eventually start working in this field? What got you there?

Pedro: Yeah, so I started doing personal projects all the time and after one or two months doing 3D the 3D was even more exciting for me than the university. So I was putting all my efforts doing 3D but I was working with my father and doing the university at night too, but it got to the point that I was really happy doing that and with my father we were usually working in events, like this one. but for different areas, cars and stuff. And I wasn't happy. I was saying, "Hey, dad, I really want to do things in the right way. I want to take my time and do things as best as I can."

Pedro: And he was like, "Man, we don't have time. We got to do it." And I was like, "No, man, I think I can do better!" And then, one day, I was like, "Hey, I think I will just leave the work and I will try to just keep doing 3D. So I was taking my decisions to ... I'm going to give up on working because I found something special here. And my father and mother, they were worried with me all the time since I was a kid because I couldn't really focus on anything. And when I gave up on working with my father and take the safe step, they were like, "Man, this guy's crazy."

But after some time working, like maybe 6 months, I started working with an architecture company doing small things here and there and I was pushing my personal projects all the time and eventually I did something that was featured on CGSociety and I was hired for a big studio in Rio and-

Chris: What was the project?

Pedro: It's a project called The Wonder Years that was based on my childhood. And it was cool. It was the first time to have people like it's really ... I was putting enough feelings on 3D art because before it was just modeling cubes and-

Chris: Sure, sure, sure. So that's cool.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then with this project I got a interview with a studio called Seagulls Fly and I had to move to Rio and also, again, I felt my parents like, "Hey. I'm leaving the university." And they were like, "Oh, man, I ... " They were against it. They were worried.

Chris: Sure, sure. So you moved to Rio?

Pedro: Yeah. Yeah, I moved to Rio. I was maybe 18, 19 years old. And then I really got to learn what is an artist is because I didn't know before. I had no art around me or enough people talking about art around me and I got the chance to work with real artists. So it was a life changing experience because my world expanded so much even though it was a ... It was a rough time, too.

Chris: Right. Yeah, okay. But this was your first thing in 3D you made after all these decisions where you tried something, didn't like it, stopped, tried something, didn't like it, then you go to university. But you found something that you felt you could express yourself in some way, right?

Pedro: Yeah.

Chris: So moving to Rio was a big deal, you were only 18, 19 years old?

Pedro: Yeah.

Chris: It was a little bit rough, though, right?

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it was tough because I was just starting so I was a trainee or something like that and yeah, the salary was just enough. I was taking that as a work experience so I was just accepting. And their studio was very famous back in the days so yeah, I started working there and asking ... Because they thought I knew 3D because they saw ... I had just showed one image, they just saw one image from me and they thought, "Hey, this guy is doing some really cool stuff." But actually I didn't know. I didn't have a background work experience and the first work I did was like a gift box and I didn't know how to do it.

And I couldn't say that so I got to meet a few guys. There's a guy called Fabrizio and yeah, there's two Fabrizios there that was working at the time, and was just going to their desks and like, "Hey man, you've got to help me because I really don't know how to do it." And they were just going through the steps, "Hey, maybe you should do this or that."

But then I was making them so busy with me and one day they were like, "Man, you have to find your way." So I was staying late on the studio, just opening everyone's file and see how they were doing and ... It was a big school. Yeah.

Chris: You'd have to learn a lot on your own, that was tough, right?

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, but I had access so I could finally see how people were doing that.

Chris: Yeah, because you had no other reference before, right?

Pedro: No, no reference.

Chris: You had to do it by yourself.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah.

"One More Beer!"

Chris: Cool. Okay, so what happened after that? How were you able to keep going on this stuff? What led you to do that "One More Beer" animation that's like ...

Pedro: Yeah, so I was doing mostly Coca Cola bottles and effect shots and stuff like that.

Chris: For commercials and stuff.

Pedro: For commercials, yeah. But I wasn't ... I was learning a lot but it's not something that I was happy doing after some time because I wanted to do characters and cartoons and stuff like that so ... So after some time working there I got an e-mail from a studio called Techno Image and they

were like branding company but they wanted to start doing illustration and 3D there and there's a guy who's an amazing illustrator and I'm a huge fan of his work and I thought, "Oh, man, there's something really special about this guy and I want to learn from him."

So I went there after two years working at Seagulls Fly. I went there to be the 3D lead without any background but as I was working a big studio they thought, "Oh, this guy has a lot of experience and stuff," and I decided to take this as a challenge.

So went there, there's another artist that was working there, he started at the same day I started, a 2D illustrator and I was working with them and we were having a lot of conversations about art and they didn't know anything about 3D so was great for me because they were expressing themselves in a more artistic way and I had to figure out technically how to do things. And that was really important for me because I started to, "Don't get attached to technique or rendering things and modeling tools." But we're still doing a lot of commercial stuff like bags and once a year I will do a character.

Chris: Once a year? Yeah, that's not satisfying.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah. So I was like, "Oh, man." So I just decide I wanted to work for animation studios like Disney and Pixar but it was so distant. I really didn't know, I didn't speak English, I didn't know if it was possible. I didn't know nothing about visa so I was like, "Oh, maybe I can try to do my own stuff as close as what they're doing there." And it was kind of a good journey because there's commercial stuff with characters in Brazil but nothing close to what I want. So I was like, "Oh, man, maybe I should try to do it." And it took me one year and a half to do "One More Beer" because it was like really, I really need to know things.

Chris: So you were learning that?

Pedro: Yeah.

Chris: Yeah, yeah.

Pedro: So I took that as a really experience because every work I was doing, I was struggling. Every work I was struggling so much that I was like, "Man, there's something wrong about it. I think it's not supposed to be that way."

So I took "One More Beer" as experience and after I had a friend working with me, an animator and it was a fun project. And also music, I didn't

know anybody that was doing music so I got to know some artists, some musicians that were playing on the subway.

Chris: Oh, yeah?

Pedro: Yeah, that was fun, man.

Chris: That's awesome!

Pedro: Yeah, I was like, "Man, I think this short is almost done but how I'm going to do the soundtrack? And then, one day, I was just going back home and I saw guys playing really viking music on the subway and then I went there, it's a band called Mustache e os Apaches and I went there and talked to them and showing like, "Hey, guys, I'm doing this short film and blah, blah, blah," and they got really excited about it.

It was like a first collaboration with musicians and yeah, so it was cool. And then I wanted also to do sound design so I got to meet an audio studio and I went there like, "Hey, guys, I have this short film and I want to hire you guys for doing the sound effects and I want to pay with my own earned money." And I had no idea how much it costs and they knew I was just a kid and like, "Fine, let's help this guy."

And we managed to bring a guy that was doing the voiceover for Disney movies. Yeah. So in Brazil we have ... Yeah, like voiceover from ... Like a translated-

Chris: Translated, yeah, yeah, oh, yes! Dubbing!

Pedro: Yeah, dubbing, budding. Yeah, exactly.

So we managed to get a guy from Disney so it felt like really a Disney production because it was like magic days because it's the first time we are putting something together that feels like a real movie. Even though it was like a 30-seconds thing.

Chris: Yeah, it was great.

Pedro: But it was magic, man. Magic days. And then I really had no expectations, I just wanted to do something and I posted online and it was crazy.

Chris: Yeah, I remember everyone seeing that thing.

Pedro: Yeah, everyone saw that and I started to get e-mails from international companies and it was like my world was expanding again.

- Chris: Yeah, Lon was showing it to me. He's like, "Look at that!" And I was like, "Oh, this is really funny. This is really funny." I think you used V-Ray for it render, right?
- Pedro: No, I think the one was still Mental Ray.
- Chris: Still Mental Ray?
- Pedro: Yeah, back in the days, yeah. 2012. I was struggling with render and I was like, "Man, there should be another way of doing things, too," because ... Yeah, that's what I had access at the time. And I started digging through other engines so I started learning, learn V-Ray, I used a little Maxwell Render for some time.
- Chris: Yeah, okay. Well that's really cool.

Moving for *Moana*

- Chris: So I remember the year that you and Victor were over at THU and there was recruiting going on at that time and then I found out that the two of you guys both went to go to Disney to go work on Moana.
- Pedro: Yeah.
- Chris: So tell us a little bit about that because obviously you had that, now that you've created that people could see the kind of work you did and that led to some opportunities for you, right?
- Pedro: Yeah, yeah. So after "One More Beer," from day to night I started directing commercials and we produced a lot of stuff at the time in the Techno Image studio but I really didn't know how to do animation because I just did one but we did a few more things that people were liking it. But the process was like ... Was crazy because we didn't know anything about pipeline, we didn't know anything about how to really make things and after doing some spots I was exhausted, man.
- So I realized I wasn't ready for directing and supervising. So I was like, "If I want to do animation I really want to learn with people that knows how to do it." So I decided to leave the partnership and came to THU and got the

chance to show my work to Disney and eventually we got hired and I was there with one of my best friends and a guy that we learned so much together, we were sharing ... Our experiences.

Pedro: It was like a dream coming true, just to have access to information. Because after so many years finally you see something that works.

Chris: Yeah. So what was it like coming from Brazil and then moving to Burbank in California?

Pedro: Man, it's surreal, man.

Chris: Surreal, right?

Pedro: It's surreal, man. Life sometimes can surprise you ... Yeah, in ways that, like, it's really surreal man.

Chris: Right.

Pedro: Because yeah, you went into my talk I was saying when I started doing 3D that I moved to Rio was like taking cold showers for seven months, we didn't have hot water. And then living in the craziest building of-

Chris: Rio, yeah.

Pedro: One of the craziest building, the Rio with rats and stuff and then you move to Burbank, it's like, "Oh, man." It's really crazy.

I mean, from Brazil and the perspective we had. And people around me, I feel so lucky and I feel so grateful that life brought me to those paths and so, yeah. I'm really grateful. And I was lucky, too, because I understand why my father and mother they were so worried about me. Because that could not be work and I could be like ...

Chris: Yeah, but it did work.

Pedro: Yeah, it did work.

Chris: It did work.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: And everything turned out ... I'm sure your parents must have been amazingly proud of you.

- Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, yeah. My father was like, "I was lucky you didn't hear me because I didn't want you to do the 3D and now you're just doing your stuff and doing well."
- Chris: Awesome. Yeah. That must have been amazing to be able to do that and have that opportunity. I was very touched by your story but I think it was a little hard for you in Burbank, too, right?
- Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it's tough because I come from a very different background. And then, especially for me I didn't go to the university so I don't have a lot of art background. I just do stuff by doing. And then you go there and there's people that went to Harvard and my English was even worse than it is right now.
- So you feel like ... I felt very scared. "What I'm doing here? I don't belong here." There's this thing that you feel you're not ready to be there or you don't deserve to be there. So it was a process of ... I had to go through that to really value my background because life is not only about you go to the best places, the best universities but with that experience at Disney I learned that your life experience has a lot of value. How you feel things, how do you feel the person, how do you treat the person around you? That kind of stuff is a valuable thing. And that kind of stuff put me in a place where there's people that had a big background. They had the opportunity to go to the best places to study and ...
- Chris: Right. But I think what I like about the industry that we're in is that there is room for everyone from every part of it. You don't ... If you want to be a lawyer you have to go to law school and that's fine, that's good. Of course you have to learn that stuff but you can't be a self-taught lawyer.
- Pedro: Yeah, man, definitely.
- Chris: Yeah, that doesn't work that way. But you had the opportunity and the fact that you could, when I went to Digital Domain there were people who never went to college and there are people with PhDs from MIT. All working together. And so that's fine, I think that's part of the thing that's magical about working in CG or in the arts in general. So it's not necessarily ... Maybe there is definitely value in going to school and learning some stuff but that's not for everyone because, at the same time, you were completely self-taught and that takes a huge amount of discipline that some people don't have that discipline so it's a uplifting for everyone to do that.
- Chris: But how long did you stay at Disney?

- Pedro: I stayed for maybe ten months, 11 months because I had a contract there just for the film and that was a big thing for me, as well, because in Brazil the industry is smaller and it's way more personal. Because when you get awarded you stay there and I didn't know what to expect. You create expectations going to a big studio and you don't know exactly how it works, you don't know where you're stepping so you're kind of blind, somehow. And yeah, I got the chance to do a lot of stuff in Moana because ... That was the cool thing. I didn't know the way I was doing was right or wrong but when I got there and started working, the supervisors, they realized, "Hey, this guy has some valuable experience."
- And they started throwing me really cool stuff and big sequences. It was like, "Man." I was literally telling them like, "Hey, guys, thanks for giving me the opportunity to do that but I don't know if I really can handle because I have never done this. And they were like, "Man, just do it. I think you can do it, I'm trusting you." So, yeah.
- Chris: They also gave you some time.
- Pedro: Yeah, yeah, they also gave me some time.
- Chris: What sequences were you doing on it?
- Pedro: Well I started doing a small sequence which is like Maui's cave. And then this was the first one I got a chance to work and then right after that they said, "Hey, there's a sequence here, the big barge, Kakamora's barge like, "Whoa. No way." And I didn't know if I could handle that but yeah. Because it's more like psychology-
- Chris: Psychological, yeah.
- Pedro: Psychological thing. And then I started doing that and then I worked on the lava monster.
- Chris: Wow.
- Pedro: So I got the chance to work on the lava monster, on the lookdev side. And then I worked on the crab, the big crab sequence. The lair of Tamatoa. And yeah, quite a lot of stuff I did for the film. Yeah, and after that I was done with the film, went back home to Brazil and kind of like, "Oh, man. What should I do now?"
- Chris: Right.

- Pedro: Because I created expectations just to be there and then after the project is done and I was like ... I really felt like I didn't feel myself leaving a different country. Just because the language and the cultural barrier and all that stuff ... I was there but I lost my personality. The interaction with people was ...
- Chris: Very different.
- Pedro: Yeah, it was different. Not because of them but because my English wasn't really good so the conversation would get a little ... I couldn't respond and people were making jokes and I wasn't understanding so I was just shaking my head like, "Oh, yeah." But-
- Chris: It's difficult. Even Americans themselves, they're very much about making jokes. Especially the jokes that are all about popular culture in the United States. So if you come from Sao Paulo you're not going to understand it. Even people that speak English like people from the UK, they're not going to get the references and it's all about that. So it must have been very ... Someone who's been going through all these struggles that you've been going through, probably ... You said you were homesick a little bit, right?
- Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Definitely and I'm a very sensitive person. When I'm in a place I really feel a lot of stuff. Like a big wave. If it's just a small wave when it gets to me it gets very big. So I was really feeling things.
- Chris: Right.

Back to Brazil

- Pedro: Yeah, so I went back home and just started to re-plan my career because I want to do animation but I don't know if I want to live abroad. And I started freelancing again and started to thinking more like, "What should I do, what should I do?"
- I went to Disney to get some answers. But when I left I had even more questions. So that was the tough part because I was spending so much time thinking and thinking and thinking and thinking ... But I ended up

realizing that the stuff that I was doing in Brazil was right so that was the answer.

Chris: Yeah. You realized, having done that experience, that you weren't missing something in Brazil, right?

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Chris: You had everything you wanted back in Brazil.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Pedro: So I had to go to the US just to see how they worked and after knowing how to do things I was very comfortable just to stay in Brazil and try to do stuff from there.

Chris: Right. So what did you start doing in Brazil?

Pedro: Yeah, I started freelancing around. So after that, because I'm ... I always have been working different areas of CG like a generalist. But when you say somebody in the US like on the big studios like, "Hey, I'm a generalist," they will say like, "Okay, we don't hire generalists."

Chris: Not true anymore. I mean, there's ... Not necessarily at Disney but even ILM has a generalist group.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's right.

Chris: And so generalists used to, you're right, it used to be a bad word because no, you are not just a modeler, are you a hard surface modeler or a character modeler and it was like, "Really?" It's that specific.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Chris: But it's nice that generalists are coming back and generalists are very important, now. But you are a generalist.

Pedro: Yeah and then I learn about this ... Like visual development in 3D started to be a thing by the time, back in 2017. So people started to hire me as a visual development artist which was the same as generalist. And after that they started working on pre-production work. So I was started working with Dreamworks and then Guerrilla Games and yeah-

Chris: But you were doing this in Brazil, right?

Pedro: Yeah, in Brazil, Brazil. So people were developing projects and they had a very small group of people like writers, directors, sometimes a designer. And I was just working with them, trying to find the final look of a film or a series and that gave me a new perspective because now I don't want to be a production artist and I don't want ... I don't need to have a big team. I can do just a small part of the process, like defining some stuff visually and then we'll have the whole team there to produce the thing.

Chris: Right.

Pedro: So it was more artistic and more expressive for me and yeah, so it was a great time, man.

And eventually after that I felt like I was doing that but when you're working for a production you never know if the project goes out or not or if it's going to take six months or five years and after a few years, now it's been three years, most of the stuff I've done never got released. So you get like, "Oh, man, I want to do something else ... " Not something else. I'm happy doing that but I also want to show people-

Chris: What you can do.

Pedro: Yeah, what I can do and so I started doing small projects, directing and producing everything with Fernando, Fernando Peque, a friend. So we started producing cinematic and commercials and a lot of different stuff.

Pedro: And it was fun that finally I could apply all this knowledge I learned from Disney and in the pipeline that kind of work ...

Chris: Right.

Pedro: Yeah, so that was ... After so many years you arrive somewhere that's like, "Okay, I think now we know what you are doing, somehow."

Personal ups and downs

Chris: Right. But you were mentioning in your talk how you started to find music, you were going through a hard time in your life, right?

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Chris: After Disney obviously you came back and you started to find it but you still had a lot of personal things going on that were very hard for you.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah.

Chris: But you had a child that was born, right?

Pedro: Yes. Yes, yes. So yeah, life was really good, man, after Disney time I went through this little tough time figuring out what's next but then I was working again and was having fun and my wife was pregnant, we had a baby so it was like life's good again.

Pedro: And then right after my son born my father got really sick and I had a lot of work that I wasn't really expecting to have a father sick at the time. It was really crazy days, man. It was crazy days because I really didn't have time to think. I just had to be like really adult. I had to turn myself into a man and take care of family and take care of a sick father and work. I was working on really big projects, so ... People were not playing.

Pedro: And I was looking around, I was like, "Man, it's with me." My father was sick for four months and I was in this routine working a lot, taking care of my wife and the baby and going to the hospital almost every day or almost two days. And that was the time where I had to put my headphones on and listen to music. And then I started to think about my ... My life. Because I was listening to Brazilian rap and that, because in this industry we get so much influence from the American industry because that's where the work is happening so especially in Brazil there's a lot of Brazilian industry. And then eventually I saw myself work in English, making calls in English and writing e-mails, everything was English and all my references was English and you lose your root.

And when, in this tough time where I was listening Brazilian music, I started like, "Man. Now I know my roots, again. And I started to give a step back and I started to find answers and started to get the references I forgot. And also I started to see ... I was just doing a lot of work but I didn't feel like I was doing something meaningful, I was just having fun with that. And when I got in touch with the music, and that was helping me to go through a really, really tough time. Then I was like, "Man. Art is like a gift." When you get the chance to know artists and these artists helping you going through tough times in life, I felt like someone was giving me a gift. And that changes completely my perspective about

making art because I wanted to be in the same place as these guys making music.

And after that my father ended up passing away and it was insane. And there's one episode, I had panic attack one day. I was in the mall and ... I don't want to go too dark on this story. And one day I was in the mall and I was like ... Almost run away because of the noise and after going through that. And my father didn't want to be in the hospital so we spent four months trying to tell him, "Hey, you have to be here. You have to take care of yourself." And he was like, "No! I don't want to be here!" So it was like a wave that was involving everyone around, not only the family but all the medics and everyone taking care of him. And when I felt there's something wrong with me, I was like, "I want to fix this." Because I don't want to affect people in a bad way around me.

Pedro: So I went to the psychologist and it was so cool, man.

Chris: Really? How?

Pedro: It was so cool, it was because those things that I have been talking here and I talked on the presentation, that was more intense. I realized just three or four months ago, because you go through the stuff in life and you just forget about.

Chris: You didn't realize what you were going through.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah. You don't realize. And then when you start to think about those things like, "Well, yeah, there's kind of some stuff that I went through." And through that experience and through the Brazilian musicians I started writing and that felt like the best art form for me.

Pedro: Because I was doing 3D and I was ... It could look impressive sometimes because of the technique and the lighting and the model but sometimes it lacked heart. Or lacked the personal connection. So I wrote a text about these experiences with my father and having a baby at the same time and I wrote that for the Brazilian rapper and yeah, I wanted to show him how grateful I was for his art and eventually I got the chance to meet this guy called Emicida. He's huge, man. He's huge!

And I went there and I show this guy, I made a sculpture of him and I printed out with the 3D printer and wrote the text and took the photograph, a lot of different stuff. And I went there and gave to him, the guy got emotional and the people that was there got emotional and then I show this first for other people and people got really emotional. People

was just coming to me like, "Thanks for showing me that," and was just hugging me.

And that's the cool thing, I did a few talks about this subject and the more of real connection I got to people was ... It was so cool because finally I was talking about stuff that could be meaningful for people that ... Like, we all go through hard times in life. We go through struggles. And sometimes people look at you just like how people work in a studio they admire and they think, "Oh, this guy has a perfect life and everything went fine and he has a successful career and I will never get there."

So when you just go to a place like a THU that is a huge, even in the animation industry, and you just say like, "Man, I've been struggling but for some reason I managed to be here today," people just really connect in a really personal level and, yeah. So it started to really make more sense for me and I really want to push my art, to have this personal connection. Not just do something that is technically cool or ...

Working with Ron Artis II

Chris: Right. Yeah. So what led you, the story of ... One of the things that you did, you premiered it here, the music video. Just tell that whole story because it's an amazing story as well.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah. So basically going through this tough time with my father I was listening to Brazilian rapper and there's this one guy. There's a group called Racionais MCs and they used to say in their music, "No matter what you are going through have faith because there's always flowers blooming from the concrete." And I had this phrase in my head for months, months. And one day I got a call from a musician from Hawaii. He was like, "Hey, I'm that musician from Hawaii." And I searched his music online and he's a blues player and I play blues, too. So I was like, "Whoa, this guy is insane." He's-

Chris: He's very good.

Pedro: He's insane, man. I know all his references and so I think he's huge.

Chris: Yeah.

Pedro: And the lyric, what he was writing, was exactly what I was trying to do. And then we were talking and he told me, "Hey, I have this music called In My Heart and it's pretty much ... The idea that I have for this music is me playing a guitar in a city and then I go inside my heart and there's a flower there. And then when I come back this flower is in the concrete."

Pedro: I was like, "Man, are you kidding me, man?" Really. I called me wife right after I talked to Ron. I called my wife and I told her because I was telling her about the flowers in concrete-

Chris: So people can look it up, what's his name? Ron?

Pedro: Ron Artis II.

Chris: Ron, yeah.

Pedro: Yeah, Ron Artis II. And I called my wife and she couldn't believe. She cried like, "Seriously? Are you kidding me?" I was like, "Yeah, yeah!" And then Fernando, Fernando Peque, went to my place at the same day and I told Fernando before, too, about flowers in concrete.

Chris: Right.

Pedro: And it was like, "Oh, man, that's surreal, that's surreal."

Pedro: So I showed Ron's music for him and it was like, "Man, I want to be part of it." And then we started this little journey, it was like a three month little journey and we started talking.

Chris: I know that we supported you on this, Chaos Group did.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah! So yeah, that's the thing. It was kind of an independent project. We were investing our stuff so Ron was investing and me and Fernando was investing too. So Ron had no idea what his animation project-

Chris: No, yeah. They don't ... Yeah, the sticker price.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Chris: Sticker shock, I mean.

Pedro: Yeah. So I told Ron, "Hey, Ron, we really need support." So Ron was looking for a few companies to help us and we had help from a few

companies that he know and I was like, "Man, we need help on the software side." So we got the chance to talk with ... We were already in touch from other THUs-

Chris: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. We've been in touch forever, yeah, yeah.

Pedro: Yeah. And I just wrote an e-mail for Chaos Group and right away they say like, "Yeah, for sure! We are ... " And they saw the story and they saw Ron's music and we put it together like some storyboard and then we talked, also, with Rebus Farm and they said, "Hey, we might be able to help you but we have to figure out license as well."

Pedro: So they were talking to you guys, too, Chaos Group, and they didn't know we were already in touch with you guys. So Chaos Group was helping us and Rebus Farm at the same time. So it was really cool, man. Just to be able to have the support from you guys on this. It was a dream project.

Chris: It's really beautiful. So the music video, it's online now?

Pedro: Yeah, it's online now. It's called In My Heart.

Chris: In My Heart, yeah. And it's a really beautiful animation that you did for him and I'm really glad we were able to support you on it which is really great. But what was also really cool, as well, is you were going to come to THU. Tell them the story about what Andre did for you.

Chris: Like, Andre was like, "You're coming here and then you're going to premiere the video here."

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was a perfect time because we were in a meeting with Aaron and Fernando and I was like, "Man, won't it be cool just to get the chance to see this guy playing live?" And I was like, "Man."

Pedro: And then we were already invited to a THU, me and Fernando. We were going here anyway. And then we talked Andre about, "Hey, we have these projects we are doing with a musician and just checking out his music," And then he saw it and like, "Okay, let's bring this guy to our THU and we are doing the premiere with the music project." It was like, "Whoa."

Pedro: And it was kind of surreal because Ron didn't know anything about it and it's just insane to see how much fun Ron is having here with us. The guy, he came here to perform but he's doing VR and doing painting and I was like, "This guy's like- "

Chris: He is in it. It's so great.

- Pedro: Yeah, he's in it.
- Chris: Just so people know, you got, for the opening ceremony, you got to premiere the video and then Ron got to stand onstage and do a performance for everyone so we had a concert with Ron right after the opening which was incredible.
- Chris: He's been wonderful, him and his family are here with his babies and he's so involved, I see him everywhere! He's doing so much stuff, it's such a great thing. And we having the jam sessions at night. He's there, jamming on the guitar and doing all that stuff.
- Pedro: It's cool because I believe a lot in the way you put your energy in your work can attract people with the same energy because we didn't know Ron until three, four months ago and we got here and the guy has the THU spirit. He's really in it and he's a very humble guy.
- Chris: Very.
- Pedro: Very humble and he's talking to everyone and being very present, in the moment. And I believe a lot on the way you treat people and the way you do your work will attract more people like that and it's been an insane experience. And I thanked Andre many times because I talk a little bit about my background and just to be here, showing our film in a premiere in one of the main events and get the chance to meet Ron is insane. And recording a podcast.
- Chris: Oh, man. I've always wanted to do a podcast with you, you and Victor and I did one not long ago with Victor. And it's interesting to hear both of your stories, there's so many similarities but also so many of your own personality through all those things.
- Chris: Obviously it's clear that Brazilian people are extremely kind. And they have huge hearts and it's wonderful to see that expressed in your art and in the things you do and it's amazing when you have something that's personal how many people will reach out to you. People you don't barely know, like the rapper you were talking about. That's the fact, that he appreciated that stuff.
- Pedro: Yeah, yeah, it's cool. I highly recommend just open up. Because I went through a few conferences. It's been six months, six, seven months through this hard time and when you speak about what is in your heart ... And try to, of course, you don't want to have a ... Like what I had in mine going through this hard time I really wanted to, "Okay, that's not what is

life is about. We go through hard times." But I really want to have a ... Great perspective on that, otherwise you can get depressed and stuff like that.

Pedro: But I went through a really hard time but I know once that you bring perspective for people. So, of course, not changing the world but if it's making sense for one person it's already making sense for me, too. So that was the thing. So that was the thing. And the power we have doing the CG art is so big, it's affecting so many people.

Pedro: So if we have the opportunity just to ... Say stuff that happens to us and how we can help people somehow and we can make stuff that will be here for many, many years after we go and it still can make a difference there. So I believe it's a new life perspective as an artist, after going through that, and I'm kind of thankful. Because you start just viewing life in a different way and there's a whole new world to explore and ...

Chris: Oh, it's okay.

Pedro: So yeah, that's where I'm aiming to right now. I'm still doing pre-production work but I really want to push ... Find a way to make stories that make sense.

Chris: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, well I think you did a great job. Your talk was amazing, the video is great. I'm so happy we were able to help you out.

Pedro: Thank you so much.

Chris: And to be part of it because it means a lot. To be able to ... That's one of the things that we try to do at Chaos Group. Yes, we have to sell software and stuff but we also want to do things that enable artists to do what they want to do and you're the perfect example of what we wanted to try to help you.

Pedro: Yeah, yeah, definitely. And it's this kind of perspective that I was talking before. And just you reach out to some ... A big company like Chaos Group and they were super open. It was like ... It was like having a new ... People give you a new perspective and they were not expecting nothing. That's really beautiful to see.

Chris: Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, listen, we've actually been over an hour and I think you've given some amazing perspective for people to do things for their personality, for what they need to do and to look at their art and make it something that's special.

Chris: I highly encourage people to do that if they can. I think it's a good thing but it's amazing and it's so cool that we get to see each other at many THUs so it's good to see that. And your English is really good now!

Pedro: Thank you. Thank you, thank you.

Chris: Yeah. So, yeah. Thanks so much for doing this, Pedro.

Pedro: Thank you so much for the opportunity.