

56^e SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2017



LA FAMILIA

REGGIE REYES
GIOVANNY GARCÍA

GUSTAVO RONDÓN CÓRDOVA

CAST

GIOVANNY GARCÍA - as Andrés
REGGIE REYES - as Pedro

PRODUCERS

Natalia Machado Fuenmayor, Marianela Illas, Rubén Sierra Salles, Rodolfo Cova, Gustavo Rondón Córdova

CO-PRODUCERS

Álvaro De La Barra, Dag Hoel

SCREENPLAY

Gustavo Rondón Córdova

CINEMATOGRAPHY

Luis Armando Arteaga

EDITING

Andrea Chignoli, Cristina Carrasco (EDA), Gustavo Rondón Córdova

SOUND

Miguel Hormazábal, Marco Salaverria

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Matías Tikas

MUSIC

Alejandro Zavala

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RICHARD LORMAND - FILM | PRESS | PLUS

www.FilmPressPlus.com

Email: IntlPressIT@aol.com

Tel: +33-9-7044-9865

AT THE CANNES FILM FESTIVAL: +33 6 2476 3402

WORLD SALES:

Celluloid Dreams

2, rue Turgot - 75009 Paris

T +33 1 4970 0370

E info@celluloid-dreams.com



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GIOVANNY GARCÍA

GUSTAVO RONDÓN CÓRDOVA

Venezuela - Chile - Norway – 2017 – 1:85 – 5.1 – 82'

COMMENTS FROM WRITER-DIRECTOR GUSTAVO RONDÓN CÓRDOVA

THE FAMILY

In *La Familia*, Andrés is a single father who works hard to barely survive. In the absence of the maternal figure, only basic care can be offered to his 12-year-old son Pedro. Consciously or unconsciously, his father is also absent, as if expecting the boy to be raised alone, to learn alone, to survive alone.

Exploring family ties is such a pressing issue now in Venezuela, in the midst of all our inescapable social problems. Our country is undergoing a hostile and individualistic moment. That's why I chose to make a film in which the characters are shaped by their situation and its dynamics after their bond is shattered by a violent event. This film is about bringing two people together, a father and son. Their first step is to repair the bond to live a new existence.





VIOLENCE

Violence has been a problem in Venezuela for many decades, but has seriously declined over the last 20 years. There has been a huge increase in the number of delinquent children, and their crimes have become more violent. In the slums, the only efforts to prevent children from roaming the streets is to try and keep them indoors, but even this is no guarantee they'll stay out of trouble.

In *La Familia*, Pedro hurts another boy in self-defense and must face the consequences of expected revenge from his gang or the other family. The father flees with his son, but not to escape the law. There is scarcely a moment when they are slightly afraid of the law. In this case, fear is about man who has turned against man, in a place where no one pays for his own faults.

GIOVANNY GARCÍA AS ANDRÉS

No matter how much realism I wanted for the film, I knew that Andrés had to be played by an experienced actor. I felt confident that I could generate a symbiosis between a pro actor's interpretation and a young non-actor. Since Giovanni García is a very physical guy and also somewhat of a handyman, his ability to slip into the character's activities brought an additional texture of reality to the film. He's an actor who does not care how he looks so he was the perfect guy to eat, sleep and sweat the role. As I requested, he slept and showered the minimum during the shoot. Giovanni's Andrés shows scars and weaknesses, strengths and desires. He is constantly confronted with the aggressiveness of the other characters, and he is far from what his son admires, but he manages to find the force to defend what he believes he must defend.

REGGIE REYES AS PEDRO

From the start, I wanted young Pedro to be played by a non-actor, and I wanted him to have the roughness of the street. We did an extensive casting throughout Caracas, visiting schools, sports centers, dance venues, etc, sometimes very close to the scouted locations. Together with the casting directors, we designed an acting workshop for the pre-selected children. We all knew immediately that Reggie Reyes was who we had been looking for to play Pedro. His presence was strong, rough, yet tender at the same time. He generated affection, but not pity. He has a great personality and remnants of childhood still remain in his gaze. For a 12-year-old, he had the discipline to get through our often complicated shooting days.





A CHRONOLOGICAL SHOOT

Both Giovanni García and Reggie Reyes embraced the shooting process I proposed: all the actors had to be willing to work without reading the script. They read only the immediate scenes the same day or perhaps a day before. We designed an almost chronological shooting schedule and we kept it until at least week five of the seven-week shoot. Even the last week coincided with the film's ending. I think this method was extremely helpful for me as a rewriting tool and as director. And especially Giovanni and Reggie, who did not know each other at all. During the shoot, they began to establish a relationship, which coincided with the film's storyline so we see the evolution of their emotional bond.

CARACAS

I felt strongly about shooting on location with the intention of documenting a specific moment in Venezuela. There is a shortage of food, medicine, water, electricity, and the highest inflation in the world as the country undergoes an unprecedented economic crisis.

I wanted to make Caracas a character. It is a place that fascinates me and encourages me creatively. I wanted to show the city and its inhabitants, its contrasts, its sparkling personality and also its roughness, its hardness. It's an immense place full of diverse people immersed in the same dynamics, where the only difference seems to be purchasing power.

Caracas is also a city that shapes its inhabitants. It is there in the streets where Pedro and many children like him get the education they do not receive at home. The young learn fast in a world where appearance, money and lawlessness rule.

AESTHETICS

How to achieve strong cinematography without betraying the realism of the film? I wanted a rough aesthetic, expressive and hard, but which respected realism carefully enough to reveal its beauty. We chose cinematographer Luis Armando Arteaga, born in Venezuela and raised in France. I knew he was right for *La Familia* based on his work in the features *Volcano (Ixcanul)* and *El Dorado XXI*, and some short films that he shot in Latin America. With Luis, we steered away from an ultra-defined, extra-illuminated, over-stylized image. We wanted a look that was consistent with the story and world presented. Together with art director Matías Tikas, we tried to compose a film rich in background textures, elements. In the film there are no establishing shots, but movement and framing were crucial. We were all tuned in to the same ideas and it was a dynamic creative process.

BIOGRAPHIES

GUSTAVO RONDÓN CÓRDOVA

La Familia is the feature film debut of Gustavo Rondón Córdova. He has written, directed and produced several short films shown at international festivals (Berlinale, Tribeca, Biarritz, Toulouse, Havana). His most recent short *Nostalgia* was selected for the Berlinale Competition 2012 and broadcast by prestigious European channel ARTE. Born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1977, he holds a Communications degree from the Central University of Venezuela (UCV), as well as a Film Degree from the Film Directing Academic Program at the Film and Television School from the Academy of Interpretative Arts in Prague (FAMU), Czech Republic.

GIOVANNY GARCÍA as Andrés

Venezuelan actor Giovanni García plays the leading role of struggling father Andrés in Gustavo Rondón Córdova's *La Familia*. He previously acted Rober Calzadilla's *El Amparo*, which won prizes at international festivals, including Sao Paulo, Havana, Biarritz, Milan, Marseilles. He trained at the Juana Sujo Theater School and at the National Theater Company in Venezuela. García lives in Caracas, where he is an active member of the theater community.

REGGIE REYES as Pedro

Reggie Reyes makes his screen debut in Gustavo Rondón Córdova's *La Familia*. He was born and raised in Caracas in 2002, and is the oldest of three. The casting directors noticed him for the first time playing soccer in the working-class neighborhood where he lives with his parents and siblings. He is currently a high school student.

