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FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIÁN  
2018

# ROJO

A FILM BY  
BENJAMÍN NAISHTAT

When everybody is silent,  
nobody is innocent





## ROJO

A film by Benjamin Naishtat

2018 / 109 minutes / format 1:85 / Colour / 5.1

Argentina • Brazil • France • Netherlands • Germany

## SYNOPSIS

In the mid-seventies, a strange man arrives in a quiet provincial city. In a restaurant, without any apparent reason, he starts insulting Claudio, a renowned lawyer. The community supports the lawyer and the stranger is humiliated and thrown out of the place. Later that night the stranger, who is determined to wreak a terrible vengeance, intercepts Claudio and his wife Susana. The lawyer then takes a path of no return involving death, secrets and silence.

## CAST

Dario Grandinetti..... Claudio  
Andrea Frigerio..... Susana  
Alfredo Castro..... Detective Sinclair  
Laura Grandinetti..... Paula  
Diego Cremonesi..... Strange man  
Susana Pampin..... Music Teacher  
Claudio Martínez Bel..... Vivas  
Rudy Chenicoff..... Magician  
Mara Bestelli..... Mabel  
Rafael Federman..... Santiago

## CREW

Director..... Benjamin Naishtat  
Screenwriter..... Benjamin Naishtat

Production Company..... Pucará Cine  
Co-Production Companies..... Desvia  
..... Ecce Films  
..... Viking Film  
..... Sutor Kolonko

Associate Production Companies. Bord Cadre Films  
... Le Tiro  
... Jempsa

Producers..... Barbara Sarasola-Day  
..... Federico Eibuszyc  
Co-Producers..... Emmanuel Chaumet  
..... Rachel Daisy Ellis  
..... Marleen Slot  
..... Ingmar Trost  
Associate Producers..... Jamal Zeinal Zade  
..... Dan Wechsler

Director of Photography..... Pedro Sotero  
Sound Director..... Fernando Ribero  
Art Director..... Julieta Dolinsky  
Editor..... Andrés Quaranta  
Composer..... Vincent van Warmerdam  
Casting Director..... María Laura Berch  
Wardrobe..... Jam Monti  
Hair & Make up..... Dolores Giménez  
Direct Sound..... Pedro Sá Earp  
Sound Mixing..... Simon Apostolou  
Line Producer..... Mariano Fernández  
Sales..... Luxbox





## BENJAMIN NAISHTAT BIO



Born in Buenos Aires, 1986.

He studied at the Universidad del Cine. With a scholarship from the French Ministry of Culture, he completed a two years contemporary arts program at the Fresnoy- Studio National des Arts Contemporains in Lille, France.

He directed the shorts *Historia del Mal* (Rotterdam 2011) and *El Juego* (Cannes Cinéfondation 2010).

His feature film debut, *Historia del Miedo* (History of Fear, 2014) world premiered in 2014 Berlinale's Official Competition and played in more than 30 film festivals including San Sebastián, Karlovy Vary, Toulouse, BAFICI, IndieLisboa, CPH-PIX, Mumbai, New York MOMA's New Directors/New Films, Rio de Janeiro, Jeonju (Grand Prix), San Francisco (New Director's Award), Wrocław New Horizons (FIPRESCI award) and Bahía Blanca Film Festival (Best Film award).

*El Movimiento* (The Movement, 2015), his second feature film premiered at Locarno Film Festival 2015, in Cineasti del presente. The film won the Jury's Special Prize in Valdivia Film Festival, Best Film in the Argentine Competition of the Mar del Plata International Film Festival and was the opening film at the Film Society and Cinema Tropical New Latin American 2016.

*Rojo* (2018), his third feature has been selected for 2018 Toronto's Platform and San Sebastian's Official Competition.

## FILMOGRAPHY

2010. . . . . El juego (short) – Cannes Cinéfondation

2011. . . . . Historia del Mal (short) – Rotterdam Spectrum Shorts

2014. . . . . Historia del Miedo (History of Fear) – Berlinale Competition

2015. . . . . El Movimiento (The Movement) – Locarno Cineasti del Presente

2018. . . . . Rojo – Toronto, Platform / San Sebastian Official Competition

## CAST

### DARIO GRANDINETTI

Julieta (2016) by Pedro Almodovar

Wild Tales (Relatos salvajes, 2014) by Damián Szifrón

Talk to Her (Hable con ella, 2002) by Pedro Almodovar

International Emmy Award (2012) for Best Actor.

### ALFREDO CASTRO

Los perros (2017) by Marcela Said

The Summit (La cordillera, 2017) by Santiago Mitre

El club (2015), No (2012), Tony Manero (2008) by Pablo Larraín

Fénix Film Award (2015) and Platino Award (2018) for Best Actor.

### ANDREA FRIGERIO

Mi obra maestro (2018) by Gastón Duprat

Desire (Desearás, 2017) by Diego Kaplan

El ciudadano ilustre (2016) de Mariano Cohn y Gastón Duprat





## INTERVIEW

**How did you come up with the idea of Rojo? Did you intend to continue with a certain line of work started in *Historia del miedo* (History of Fear) and *El movimiento* (The Movement), your two previous films?**

There is always some kind of continuity. In this case, it has to do more with historical interests, but also formal interests. My first movie included some horror film elements in order to treat the subject of class paranoia in Argentina. The second one was also based on the history of the country, with the idea of revising the past and attempting to say something about certain current tensions. *Rojo* is a project that has been hanging around my head for a long time and it has to do with my fixation with the 1970s. Anyone who was born in Argentina in the eighties carries the weight of some sort of symbolic burden. Besides, in my case, there is a family history of persecution and exile that precedes me and still resonates.

**What was your main motivation during the creative process?**

The starting point was not only to make a film about the seventies, but also to make a film that reflected the cinematographic style of that time and my admiration for certain American films from the seventies. I am thinking of filmmakers such as Francis Ford Coppola, Sidney Lumet or John Boorman, who could make genre films and at the same time deal with politically sensitive issues. I wanted to make a crime film about a lawyer who one night makes a man he has met by chance disappear. But beyond the crime genre, the film portrays a social situation of silence and complicity in a country that was moving towards its darkest moments in history.

**In your three feature films, we can see an interest in exploring areas of conflict in Argentine history, moments when very strong antagonisms came to the fore.**

History is not a photograph that remains still and from which we move away. It is a dynamic, resounding thing. Today, it is very clear in Argentina, where history is alive and resounds in people. That is why it is important to keep that history alive, but also to retain a relevance to the present day, which is what this movie attempts to do: to talk about the apathy of people when serious things happen around them and they look elsewhere. Here, and in other parts of the world, people are not reacting to the things going on around them.

**How was the research process of immersing yourself in the seventies and cinematographically recreating that period?**

It was a fascinating process that combined historical, cinematographic and family research. There were also great contributions from the film crew, from the cinematographer Pedro Sotero to the art director, Julieta Dolinsky, who undertook their own research. Making a period film is very difficult because of all that it implies at a production and financial level. However, it was wonderful to enter the set and see another time reproduced. It is the closest experience to some kind of time travel.

**Besides a journey around some key moments of Argentine history, in your movies there is a focus on human misery. Why is that?**

I find it hard to write about very virtuous characters. I know there are some, but I find human contradictions and negativity much more appealing. For some reason, the viewer strongly empathizes with that, because everyone has the capacity to behave in a miserable way; nobody can escape from that. Acknowledging that is a strong experience. The lawyer played by Darío Grandinetti somehow represents that. He is not exactly a villain, but he is a guy who tries to personally benefit from a situation and, if he needs to stay silent to protect himself, he certainly will.

**The movie describes the chance encounter of Grandinetti and two other characters, moments that bring out the worst in him and change his life completely.**

He transforms little by little. At the beginning, he hesitates and feels guilty, but in the end, he has stopped resisting his meaner impulses. At the same moment that Argentina accepts that it is heading towards a military dictatorship and that a genocide is going to take place, he totally and cynically embraces his mean side. He can choose more than once between doing the right thing or acting in his own self-interest and he always takes the second option.

**The film is not only set in the seventies, but it also brings back the cinematic ‘grammar’ of that period – the use of zoom, dissolves, slow motion...**

There are dissolves and zoom, the sound mix is mostly mono and the image has a patina of film negative that attempts to evoke the look of that time. The sound was processed with some old compressors that generate a particular equalization, typical from the technology of that era. Moreover, the lenses we used, by Panavision, are from those days. The original score, with its instruments and arrangements, was composed according to the music of the film scores from that period.

**How did you work on the visual and image composition of the film? How did you arrive at the combination of colors and the predominance of green, ochre and red?**

There is a color palette carefully chosen according to the look of that period and what the negative film stock provided back then. It was a joint work between the cinematography and the art teams. We used low luminosity lenses, so the movie has some contrast. We also worked with slow motion, a resource of that period that you may find, for instance, in Sam Peckinpah. We did a lot of research on the textures, the colors and the objects of that time, as well as some of the typical elements of the crime film, integral to the costume design, such as in the detective’s overcoat.





**With regard to your taste for Friedkin, Peckinpah and Boorman, do you have any particular interest in the violence of their films, which is also something that is present in almost every scene of Rojo?**

In Argentina, relations are marked by a logic that states that someone must dominate the other. That happens many times in the movie. At several moments, there is a duel between the characters; they all have to test each other and fight. That is the way they think shows their dominance over others. They think they have to behave that way. They feel they have to crush others. In that sense, something quite western-like runs through these stories. They are all based around small duels. However, these situations in daily life represent other, greater, fights. There is a desire to show their power over others.

**Each character seems to incarnate a negative side of society. For instance, would the Chilean policeman played by Alfredo Castro represent religion?**

He is a character with almost mystical features that is inherently Argentine. The military in the seventies carried a messianic burden regarding how Argentinians should be - Christian and patriotic. Castro's character represents ultra-right fanaticism which back then was presented as a shield against the so-called "red threat", which was unpatriotic and atheistic.

**How did you work on the relationship between the staging and the performances?**

The most interesting thing about this is that the actors are working in a tone that is definitely not naturalistic. The dialogue feels almost recited. The conversations are an attempt to evoke something from the cinema of the seventies, where there was a type of film dialogue that was full of symbolism with things to read between the lines. During rehearsal, we had to work on that style of unnaturalistic tone.

**Why did you work on that aspect that is pretty absurd and odd in some situations that are quite dark?**

These are dense subject areas and I believe that there had to be a healthy dose of humor. Some lines in the script go in that direction. There are absurd scenes and conversations in order to decompress certain moments and take away some solemnity from the subjects.



## WITH THE SUPPORT OF

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