



# HISTORY OF FEAR

*a film by BENJAMIN NAISHTAT*



64<sup>th</sup> Internationale  
Filmfestspiele  
Berlin  
Competition



## CREW BIOGRAPHIES

### **BENJAMIN NAISHTAT (WRITER/DIRECTOR)**

Benjamin Naishtat was born in 1986, Buenos Aires, where he currently lives and works. He studied at the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires and completed his studies at Le Fresnoy - Studio National des Arts Contemporains in France.

Benjamin has directed works of fiction such as his short film *El Juego* (2010), which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival, as well as more experimental work such as his video *Historia del Mal* (2011), which premiered in Rotterdam and was shown in several exhibitions abroad.

*History of Fear* (2014) is his first feature film. He is currently developing a new project, titled *Fundamental Movement*.

### **REI CINE SRL (PRODUCTION COMPANY)**

REI CINE was created in order to provide a creative platform for groundbreaking filmmakers in Buenos Aires.

Their completed films include *History of Fear* (Benjamin Naishtat), *Leones* (Jazmin López), *Lo Que El Fuego Me Trajo* (Adrián Villar Rojas) and *Villegas* (Gonzalo Tobal) as main producers, and *Carmita* (dir. Laura Amelia Guzmán & Israel Cárdenas) as a minority partner, all successfully distributed worldwide and selected in festivals such as Berlinale, Cannes, Venice, Rotterdam and Locarno, amongst many others.

In 2013, REI CINE launched REI DISTRIBUCION, their distribution label in Argentina. Specializing in tailor-made releases of Latin American films, they handle titles like *De Jueves a Domingo* (Dominga Sotomayor), *Post Tenebras Lux* (Carlos Reygadas), or *Tanta Agua* (Ana Guevara & Leticia Jorge).

## SYNOPSIS

When a heat wave grips the suburbs, blackouts and waves of pollution push the social order to the brink of collapse, forcing each inhabitant to confront his own motives, instincts and fears.

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

*History of Fear* is a film about scared people. In the context of the chaotic summer in the suburbs, the social order reveals itself to be fragile and about to give in. All the characters appear to have a motive that lets instinct drive their decisions. The audience must join the characters in their uncertain drift, walk into the dark with them, and project that which lies in the core of fear itself.

# INTERVIEW WITH BENJAMIN NAISHTAT

## **HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE HISTORY OF FEAR?**

*History of Fear* is an ensemble film which deals with social violence in my country, both visible and invisible. I intended to portray things in such a way that the atmosphere of the film is a vehicle for all my thoughts about all that's wrong in Argentina—and pretty much everywhere else in Latin America and other parts of the world. It's a bit of a mix between a thriller and a social film, and incorporates certain experimental elements too.

## **WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND? YOUR PREVIOUS WORKS? HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THE IDEA FOR HISTORY OF FEAR?**

I have directed fiction shorts and more experimental works, often dealing with the same subjects: violence, history, memory. *History of Fear* was developed over a period of four years, and is the result of many different approaches to the same problems. I have tried to mix a classical character-lead narrative with certain genre elements, and even a series of strange interviews—carried out by the character Camilo—which work as a kind of excursus to the main plot.

## **TELL US ABOUT THE WORK / THE PROCESS WITH THE CAST.**

As a matter of fact, the lead actor of the film, Jonathan Da Rosa, is a non-actor. He is part of the Contemporary Dance Company KM29 and came to audition for the part of the “boy who dances” (interpreted now in the film by Daniel Leguizamon). Casting director María Laura Berch suggested we could try him for the lead role. It was a risky bet considering he had never acted before, but something in the way he inhabited his body, a kind of contained anger, convinced us it was the right decision. And the results were wonderful. As for the rest of the cast, they are mostly experienced actors. The casting process consisted of a series of non-script related interviews: they talked about their lives, about film, their political views; and within these interviews, I tried to discover something useful to add depth and enrich each character.

## **SOUND DESIGN PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN YOUR FILM. TELL US ABOUT THE IDEAS BEHIND IT.**

Sound is the main element I used to build the geographical context for each scene; the different worlds that coexist in the film are mostly built using soundscapes. The gated community is a place of quietness and nature, the suburbs are chaotic, and the apartments in the city are silent as vaults. Sound is often a way to introduce an uncomfortable, frightening atmosphere as well, particularly in the sequence submerged in darkness towards the end of the film.

## **THE LANDSCAPES IN THE FILM SEEM FRAGMENTED, AND YET THERE IS A CERTAIN COHERENCE TO ITS OVERALL SPATIAL CONFIGURATION. CAN YOU TALK ABOUT THE GEOGRAPHY IN THE FILM?**

The landscapes are crucial since they allow me to tell without telling. The film tries not to over-explain each character's social status or position, but rather to infer it from their environments. For instance, the opening helicopter shot reveals how close—and how far away—are those who have it all from those who have nothing in the northern suburbs of Buenos Aires.

## **IN A KEY SCENE OF THE FILM, A WORD GAME IS PLAYED WHILE THE CHARACTERS ARE HAVING DINNER. IT RESEMBLES YOUR PREVIOUS WORK “EL JUEGO” (THE GAME), SCREENED AT CANNES' CINÉFONDATION 2010—WHAT DO YOU FIND INTERESTING ABOUT GAMES? WHAT ROLE DOES THAT SCENE TAKE IN HISTORY OF FEAR?**

The game is intended to have an interactive effect with the audience; I'm confident that when each character is asked what he would like to “be and have”, the audience will also think what they would like to be and have. And with this exercise a certain abstraction can take place—what is this film about, in the end? What is this all about? Those questions can reveal the social

projections that the characters and the audience are both subject to.

## **AS AN ARTIST CAMILO SEEMS TO BE ON A QUEST, SEARCHING THROUGH ARCHIVE FOOTAGE AND RECORDING ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEWS, SOMETIMES INTIMIDATING HIS SUBJECTS WITH HIS PROVOCATIVE QUESTIONS. WHAT INSPIRED THIS CHARACTER?**

Rather than a key to the film, Camilo and his work are an element of disturbance. I could imagine him as someone who makes people uncomfortable by documenting their experiences and holding onto evidence of violence. He seems to have a point, but that point is blurred, and can only crystallize as the audience relates Camilo's work to the rest of the film. This idea was in the beginning inspired by Bruce Nauman's video piece *Good Boy, Bad boy*. (Then, of course, it turned into something else.)

## **TOGETHER WITH SOLEDAD RODRÍGUEZ (DP), YOU HAVE EMPLOYED A NEAT, VERY PRECISE STYLE OF CAMERAWORK. THIS TECHNIQUE HAS CREATED A FILM WHERE TENSION BUILDS EXCLUSIVELY OUTSIDE THE FRAME. WHAT LEAD YOU TO THIS STRATEGY?**

*History of Fear* is basically a film where all tension comes from projection. The audience is encouraged to envision what's scaring the characters through suggestion and atmosphere. That's why the camera and the cinematography (both in charge of virtuous Soledad Rodríguez) are attuned to suggestion. Darkness plays a key role as well; being in the dark is a fundamental fear, and a very realistic one in the context of the film (blackouts are very common in the summer in Argentina). We submerge the audience in darkness along with the characters, who wander around erratically, and try to create—through both sound design and cinematography—a feeling of distress.

# CONTACT DETAILS

## PRODUCTION

REI CINE SRL  
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## TECH SPECS

Country of Production: Argentina, France, Germany, Uruguay, Qatar  
Language: Spanish  
Running Time: 79 minutes  
Genre: Drama  
Shooting Format: HD (Arri Alexa)  
Aspect Ratio: 2.35:1  
Sound: 5.1  
Production Companies: Rei Cine, Ecce Films, Vitakuben, Mutante Cine

## KEY CAST

Pola	Jonathan Da Rosa
Tati	Tatiana Giménez
Teresa	Mirella Pascual
Edith	Claudia Cantero
Camilo	Francisco Lumerman

## KEY CREW

Writer / Director	Benjamin Naishtat
Producers	Benjamin Domenech Santiago Gallelli
Co-Producers	Fernando Epstein Agustina Chiarino Emmanuel Chaumet Leif Magne Tangen Sarah Mirjam Schipschack
Cinematography	Soledad Rodríguez
Editors	Andrés Quaranta Fernando Epstein
Production Design	Marina Raggio
Sound Design	Fernando Ribero
Casting	María Laura Berch

