

Rojo

A film by
Benjamín Naishtat

109 min / Argentina / Brazil / France / Netherlands/ Germany / 2018
In Spanish / Certificate TBC

Toronto International Film Festival World Premiere 2018
San Sebastian International Film Festival European Premiere 2018 –
Silver Shells for Best Director (Benjamín Naishtat), Best Actor (Darío Grandinetti)
Jury Prize – Best Cinematography (Pedro Sotero)



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FOR ALL PRESS ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

Sue Porter/Lizzie Frith – Porter Frith Ltd
Tel. 07940 584066/07825 603705 porterfrith@hotmail.com

FOR ALL OTHER ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT

Robert Beeson – robert@newwavefilms.co.uk
Dena Blakeman – dena@newwavefilms.co.uk



79-80 Margaret Street
London
W1W 8TA
Tel. 020 7299 3685
info@newwavefilms.co.uk

SYNOPSIS:

Claudio is a middle-aged lawyer with a prosperous life in a placid provincial town in mid-70's Argentina, just before the military coup.

One night he enters a restaurant where he is verbally attacked by a mysterious stranger, their argument continues on the street outside, and then escalates even more with drastic consequences.

A few months later a friend comes to see Claudio about an abandoned house that he is interested in buying.

The two incidents come back to haunt Claudio later with the arrival of a Chilean private detective who is intent on locating the missing stranger, who, it turns out, is a relative of one of Claudio's friends.

Claudio's life is possibly about to unravel.

Further information and downloads [here](#)

Photo set can be downloaded [here](#)



CAST

Claudio	DARIO GRANDINETTI
Susana	ANDREA FRIGERIO
Detective Sinclair	ALFREDO CASTRO
Paula	LAURA GRANDINETTI
Strange	DIEGO CREMONESI
Music Teacher	SUSANA PAMPIN
Vivas	CLAUDIO MARTÍNEZ BEL
Magician	RUDY CHENICOFF
Mabel	MARA BESTELLI
Santiago	RAFAEL FEDERMAN

CREW

Director	BENJAMIN NAISHTAT
Screenwriter	BENJAMIN NAISHTAT
Producers	BARBARA SARASOLA-DAY FEDERICO EIBUSZYC
Co-Producers	EMMANUEL CHAMET RACHEL DAISY ELLIS MARLEEN SLOT INGMAR TROST
Associate Producers	JAMAL ZEINAL ZADE DAN WECHSLER
Production Company	PUCARÁ CINE
Co-Production Companies	DESVIA, ECCE FILMS, VIKING FILMS, SUTOR KOLONKO
Associate Production Companies	BORDE CADRE FILMS LE TIRO, JEMPSA
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 MONTO
Hair & Make up	DOLORES GIMÉNEZ
Direct Sound	PEDRO SÁ EARP
Sound Mixing	SIMON APOSTOLOU
Line Producer	MARIANO FERNÁNDEZ

Argentina/Brazil/France/Netherlands/Germany 2018

109 mins / 1.85 / Colour / 5.1

BENJAMÍN NAISHTAT

Born in 1986 in Buenos Aires, Benjamín Naishtat started studying cinema at Buenos Aires University and pursued his studies at Le Fresnoy – National Contemporary Art Studio, in France. His work includes fictions: *El Juego* (short film, 2010) selected at the Cannes Cinefondation, as well as experimental works: *Historia del Mal* (2011) screened in Rotterdam and in several international exhibitions. His first feature film, *Historia del Miedo* (*History of Fear*, 2014) was in the Official Competition in Berlin in 2014 and played at festivals including San Sebastián, Karlovy Vary and New York MOMA's New Directors/New Films. His second feature, *El Movimiento* (*The Movement*, 2015), premiered at Locarno Film Festival 2015 and won the Jury's Special Prize at the Valdivia Film Festival, and his third feature, *Rojo* (2018), was selected for the Toronto International Film Festival and San Sebastian International Film Festival.

FILMOGRAPHY

2018, *Rojo*

2015, *El Movimiento* – Locarno, Cineasti del presente

2014, *Historia del Miedo* (*Histoire de la Peur*) – Berlinale Competition

2013, *Colecciones* (Short)

2010, *Historia del Mal* (Short)

2010, *El Juego* (Short)

2009, *Historias Breves 5*

2008, *Historias Breves V: Estabamos bien* (Short)



INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR

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

There is always some kind of continuity. In this case, it has to do with historical and formal interests. My first movie included some horror 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 revisiting the past and attempting to say something about certain current tensions. Rojo is a project that I have been mulling over 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 resonates 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 and the cinematographer, Pedro Sotero, to the art director, Julieta Dolinsky, who undertook their own research. Making a period film is very difficult because of what it implies at both a production and financial level. However, it was wonderful to enter the set and see another period reproduced. It is the closest experience to some kind of time travel.

Besides a journey around some key moments of Argentine history, there is a focus on human misery in your movies. 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 empathises with that, because everyone has the capacity to behave in a miserable way. The lawyer played by Darío Grandinetti is somehow representative of this behaviour. 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 completely change his life.

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 genocide is going to take place, he totally and cynically embraces his mean side. He chooses 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 of 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 of that period.

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

There is a colour 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 movies. We did a lot of research on the textures, the colours 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. They think this is the way to show their dominance. 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 are 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 un-patriotic 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 almost feels 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.

