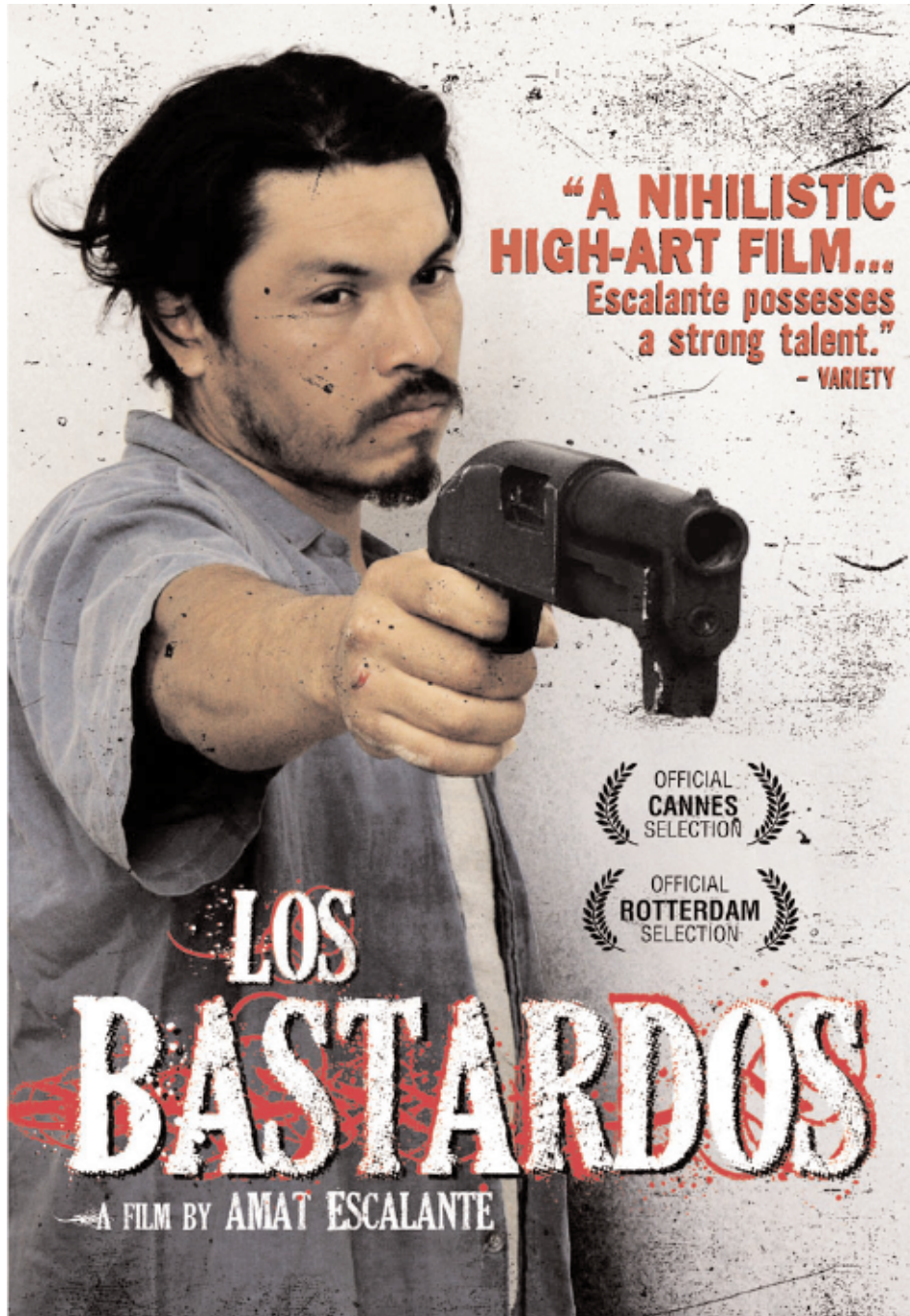


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Los Bastardos

Crew

Amat Escalante – Director
Amat Escalante & Martín Escalante – Screenplay
Matt Uhry – Cinematography
Ayhan Ergürsel & Amat Escalante – Film Editing
Daniela Schneider & Zümrüt Çavusoglu – Art Direction
Gabriel Abraham – Production Designer
Alejandro de Icaza – Sound Designer
Raúl Locatelli – Sound

Cast

Jesús Moisés Rodríguez – Jesús
Rubén Sosa – Fausto
Nina Zavarin – Karen
Kenny Johnston – Anglo Man

Los Bastardos
(The Bastards)

Mexico / France / USA
2008
90 Minutes
Scope
Dolby 5.1



Los Bastardos

SYNOPSIS:

A 24 hour period in the lives of Fausto and Jesús, two undocumented Mexican day-labourers in L.A. Each day another task, each day the same pressure to find money. They go about their daily routine, standing on the corner at the Home Improvement Store waiting for work to come.

Today, the job they are given is well paid compared to their poor usual wages. Today, Jesús carries a shotgun inside his backpack.

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Amat Escalante (Director, Writer & Producer)

Born in Barcelona, Spain, Mr. Escalante lived most of his life in Guanajuato, Mexico. He currently lives in Los Angeles.

This talented young filmmaker has studied motion picture editing and sound in the Centro de Estudios Cinematograficos de Catalunya in Barcelona, Spain and the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Television in Cuba.

Amat Escalante's first short film, *Amarrados*, won the best short film and best director awards at the Newport Beach International Film Festival and the first place at the Voladero Film Festival, Monterrey, Mexico. The film was also presented at the Cambridge Latino Film Festival, before winning an award at the Berlin Film Festival.

Escalante's feature film debut *Sangre (2005)*, was included in the section Un Certain Regard at the Cannes Film Festival in 2005. It was also presented at the Toulouse Film Festival, Rotterdam Film Festival and the San Sebastian Film Festival. *Batalla en el Cielo (Battle in Heaven)* directed by Carlos Reygadas, also counted with Amat Escalante's help – as an Assistance Director.

Los Bastardos is Amat Escalante's second feature film.



Los Bastardos

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

“What we once did ‘for the sake of God’ we now do for the sake of money. This is what at present gives the highest feeling of power.”

– Nietzsche

I began working on the script for *Los Bastardos* (The Bastards), long before immigration from Mexico had become the critical issue that it is today. It is a project that was born naturally, not so much from a certain idea that I had, but more from who I am and from having lived in the United States of America as the son of an “illegal” immigrant.

I believe that this film has now become something much more timely and important than when I wrote it into being. The current immigration crisis, involving the neighboring countries of Mexico and the United States has intensified so much from what I had observed growing up, having lived equal amounts of time in both countries. *Los Bastardos* has come out of my life’s experiences along with a certain sadness and concern for a people that are mine and the strange country that they are flocking to for the sole purpose of making as much money as they possibly can in as little time as possible. I have chosen our two main characters, Jesús and Fausto (non actors), both working men from the same area of Mexico, to express what for me is so important that audiences all over the world understand at this point in the history of these two countries and the world: the debasement of human beings in a society where they can only function with money.

For me, this film is about the worst tragedy that can happen to a human being or a country; to deliberately become a murderer. I do not believe that it is human nature to commit cold blooded murder. I believe that only a degeneration of one’s own nature can cause one to reach that point; a bastardization of one’s humanity.

I do want to differentiate cold blooded murder from self defense and/or revenge. These two issues did not interest me in relation to the main characters of my film, even though the seeds of their crime came from another man’s passion and revenge to kill an ex-love. We are so used to watching murder in the comfort of our own living rooms, but always on the other side of that important window that is the television set. I wanted to show this same violent and unwarranted death as it reaches out from the television and touches someone on their own living room couch.

From a more general point of view, I feel that we must be more careful about providing people, everywhere in the world, with the basic rights that every human being deserves, or those people will have to jump the walls and the fences and go elsewhere to get what they need.

Amat Escalante, 2008



Los Bastardos

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR AMAT ESCALANTE

What idea inspired you to start writing the script? Could you elaborate on the script writing process a little bit?

I really don't feel that this film came to me as an idea, per say, at any given moment. My last film, *Sangre*, came more from a particular idea that arrived in my head. I feel that *Los Bastardos* had formed a part of me from certain consequences in my life's experiences and circumstances that were out of my control. I have lived almost equal amounts of time in the U.S. and in Mexico. My father crossed the border into the United States illegally before I was born and he damaged his hands. He has told me this story many times and somehow it seemed so strange to me to have to jump a fence and risk so much. For what? Another very close family member crossed the border crawling through a sewer drain under the ground for twelve hours. So these are the seeds of something that ends up in *Los Bastardos* I am sure, along with the many other experiences that I have heard about.

I wrote the script with my brother Martín, from a distance, while I was visiting international film festivals and during a five month stay at the Cinefondation Cannes Residence. Martín is better at creating structure on paper, so I would just get my ideas out, without form sometimes, e-mail them to him, and he would edit and structure and then we would both review and decide. Because it was a difficult project to produce I had a lot of time to go over the ideas and the script before we actually started shooting.

How were the locations for the shooting determined? Did you have a particular reason for setting the main story in L.A?

I like to think of a story in places that I know well because then I am more in control of the space from the moment I start imagining the actions. In this case I imagined the locations but always from a pre-existing idea of standardized constructions that there are so many of in suburban areas of the U.S. Then after the script, it was just a matter of finding a location that was practical. Since they are mostly interchangeable, like a fast food restaurant chain, there were many to choose from almost exactly the same. I wanted to show really common and ordinary locations that people pass by every day but because they are just functional structures, they go unnoticed.

You worked with a diverse cast, a group of international actors. Some of them are professionals, but most of them are non professionals. How did it influence the production? Did you have any problems directing your actors?

It was very difficult and time consuming to cast the two main roles of this film. Once again my brother Martín worked on the casting for the two principal characters during about a year and a half. (MORE)



Los Bastardos

**INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR AMAT ESCALANTE
– CONTINUED –**

I am now happy that I was able to achieve my extreme idea of casting real guys from the street and helping them to incarnate an idea from my head. In the case of Jesús Moisés Rodríguez, who plays Jesús ; we encountered him at a construction site in my home town of Guanajuato, Mexico. He was excited about the idea and I was excited to have found such a face and personality. But it was extremely difficult to take him into the United States legally. We were rejected at first and this caused us a delay in shooting, but in the end we managed to get him into the country.

Ruben Sosa, who plays Fausto, came to us by one of the miracles of film making. After the first person we had casted became afraid and pulled out of the project two days before shooting started, we were left with the enormous pressure of finding someone in less than two days or postponing everything, which would have been disastrous. So the whole production team took to the streets and looked for faces and personalities.

My costume designer/art director Daniela Schneider found Ruben hanging out on a street corner, so we were able to start filming the next day. I had the most difficulty directing Ruben because of his young age and previous life experience. With both of the main actors, concentration was a big challenge and memorization almost impossible, so I had to find creative ways to get around these things. As a result, much of the dialog is different from the script and is said in the way that they would say it in their real lives.

The encounter of these two young Mexican men and the American woman was an important factor that I knew would cause a reaction or an awkwardness without me doing much. I was lucky to find Nina Zavarin after doing casting of about 300 actresses in Hollywood. I ended up finding Nina from pictures on the internet and she was close by and living in San Francisco. She was very willing to fully give herself to the project and do things that many actors would probably be hesitant about doing. During the process, these three people ended up trusting each other and me very much, and I also came to trust them in the same way, so everything was fine.

***Los Bastardos* is shot in daylight most of the time; but we can say that “It is a dark film predominantly set in bright sunshine.” What was the main reason for this contrast between theme and lighting?**

Yes, exactly. I wanted the harshness of the daylight where nothing can hide. The United States for me is in its majority a clean well kept country, where a lot is invested in covering up dirt with concrete. Especially as a Mexican, it is always amazing to cross the border into Mexico and see and feel such an aesthetic difference between the two countries. So it was important for me to show this. Also, I have always envisioned a film that cannot hide in the darkness or behind pretty scenery.
(MORE)

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L
Los Bastardos

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR AMAT ESCALANTE – CONTINUED –

The red and green screens at the beginning and the end of the film are quite important for understanding the tone of the film. What was your aim in including them, and how do they influence the film as a whole?

Basically, I was looking for a feeling of overpowering dread. Something that is bigger than us but not definable. So, I imagine that these colors and that music are an articulation of this feeling. This was actually something that came out of “instinct” as I was editing the film and I have a hard time explaining it adequately. I have felt comfortable up until now with doing things that I cannot explain, so I have come to believe that I am doing good in filming them. Otherwise what is the point?

How long did the production take, how long did you prepare before starting to shoot?

We prepared for about two months without counting the two years of development before that. Then the shooting was five weeks intense.

What part of the production left the strongest impact on you?

I think the most interesting and amazing thing that I have done again with my second film, on a personal level, is to work with two non-actors that at first can't even believe they are going to be in a movie and then to reach all the way to Cannes with them is a life changing experience for them and for me.

Did you meet any resistance or hesitation from the actors and the crew about the level of violence in the film?

No. I think we are all used to violence by now.

The two long takes at the beginning and the end frame the film smoothly and effectively. Did you envision this before editing? If not, can you elaborate on this specifically?

I wanted to start the film with pure solid concrete, unpenetrable, and end it with earth and dirt and where something can grow. The rest does not come from deliberate planning or concept but more from “instinct”. The last shot of the film was mostly an accident. After not being able to technically achieve what I wanted in the script, we tried many other things and what's in the film is the last take of the day and the actor does not even think we are shooting for at least the second half of the shot. He gave me his pure self at that moment and I was amazed. After I said ‘cut’ I knew that this was the last shot of the film.

(MORE)



Los Bastardos

**INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR AMAT ESCALANTE
– CONTINUED –**

You worked with a Turkish editor, Ayhan Ergürsel who edited all of Nuri Bilge Ceylan's feature films. Did you experience any difficulties working cross-culturally?

It was a very nice and pleasant experience to work with Ayhan. He is a true cinematic person and has great instinct. He edits along with the emotions of the characters. Even though he spoke no Spanish or English we both were able to communicate with the language of cinema.

Interview conducted by Dilek Aydin