



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION

BUENOS AIRES 1977

(CRONICA DE UNA FUGA)

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ISRAEL ADRIÁN CAETANO

BASED ON A TRUE STORY


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BUENOS AIRES 1977

CRONICA DE UNA FUGA

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ISRAEL ADRIÁN CAETANO

CAST

Rodrigo de la Serna
Nazareno Casero
Lautaro Delgado
Matias Marmorato
and Pablo Echarri

CREW

- CLAUDIO *Directed by* Israel Adrián Caetano
- GUILLERMO *Written by* Israel Adrián Caetano,
Esteban Student & Julián Loyola
- GALLEGO
- EL VASCO
- HUGUITO *Adapted from* Claudio Tamburrini's book
"Pase Libre - La fuga de la Mansión Seré"
With the collaboration of Guillermo Fernández

DP: Julián Apezteguia

Music: Ivan Wyzsogrod

Production Designers: Juan Mario Roust
& Jorge Ferrari

Production Manager: Paula Zyngierman

Sound: Fernando Soldevila

Assistant Director: Ana Droeven

Editor: Alberto Ponce

Wardrobe: Julio Suárez

Make-up: Marisa Amenta

Special Effects: FX Stunt Team

Associate Producer: Adrián Kochen

Produced by Oscar Kramer & Hugo Sigman
(K & S Films S.A. Argentina)

WWW.BUENOSAIRES1977.COM

SYNOPSIS

A true story of terror and survival from film-maker Israel Adrián Caetano.

Buenos Aires, 1977. A 'task force' working for the fascist Argentine military government kidnaps Claudio Tamburrini, goalkeeper of a B-league soccer team, and takes him to a clandestine detention centre known as Sere Mansion: a forbidding old building in the suburban neighbourhood of Moron.

Claudio enters a living hell of interrogations, beatings, humiliations & betrayals. A nightmare world of arbitrary lunatic rules and relentless violence, mental and physical. Alongside other young detainees, he battles to survive while awaiting his fate to be decided.

After four months of imprisonment, with execution looking certain, Claudio and three other prisoners make their desperate move. Forcing open a window in the middle of a thunderstorm, completely naked, they jump into the void. Their flight into the future begins.

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High-Resolution images available to download from www.wildbunch.biz (Press section)

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I have always admired survivors - those who do not give up when facing the impossible, who have been in Hell and realized that they must choose Paradise, even if it costs them their lives. I like survivors, antiheroes, those who act spontaneously.

In Argentina, in 1977, an historic event occurred which was barely remarked and criminally ignored: the escape of four young men who - because of alleged left-wing ideas or sympathies, for having known somebody with those ideas, or for no clear reason at all - were kidnapped and tortured, forced to surrender information on their lives and those of others. They were imprisoned in a detention centre known as Seré Mansion or Attila, where many were illegally detained and from which several of these 'disappeared' never emerged.

I received from my producers a proposal to make a film inspired by a book written by Claudio Tamburrini, one of the men who escaped. I agreed, and we arranged a meeting in Stockholm, where Claudio lives, and where I also met Guillermo Fernández, the man who initiated the breakout. Thus I was granted the opportunity of learning - from the book and from the protagonists - the truth about this event, so very important and yet so unknown.

What attracted me most, besides the story itself, was the image of four young men naked, handcuffed, running at dawn beneath a furious storm, to escape from a hell that would affect their lives forever.

The essence of the film was right there. Four young men, naked in every sense, hammered by the storm, injured, terrified, running without knowing where they would end.

It is good to repeat it.

I told myself I would make a movie starting from this image - a film about this story, which is also ours.

To achieve that final image of the escape, to make it move viewers as much as it had moved me when I imagined it, I had to try and recreate the hell that preceded it.

All hells are impossible to imagine fully; and their abstract essence makes it very hard to narrate them. Thus I decided to focus on the encounter of the four main characters; on getting to know them, gradually revealing their characters... thereby revealing a light within the darkness of that hell.

Buenos Aires 1977 narrates a horror, not in order to provoke horror but rather a better understanding of the relationships between prisoners in an extreme situation. This is a picture of life in the hell of an illegal detention centre of the Argentine military dictatorship in the 70s.

The filming was an endless challenge: shooting almost entirely within four walls, trusting the outcome to the acting, the framing, and the light. It was not always easy to generate fear, paranoia, and neurosis from this prison.

How can we conceive madness?

Buenos Aires 1977 is a thriller about corruption, but this corruption is orchestrated; it arises from people following orders, without question.

The film focuses on how torture causes human beings to disappear – not a physical disappearance but a psychological one. And on how the mere fact of conceiving an escape in that madhouse, the very mention of it, itself becomes madness.

That is the reason why, I reiterate, I like people who act spontaneously: those who ignore the fact that what they are doing will transcend themselves.

Because this madness was transformed utopically (forgive me if this word doesn't exist) and turned Hell upside down.

- *Israel Adrián Caetano*

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Israel Adrián Caetano was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1969. Aged 16, he moved to Argentina, and made his first short films: "Visiting Carlos Paz" ("Visite Carlos Paz") (1992) and "Calafate" (1993). In 1994, his project "Down Hill" ("Cuesta Abajo") was joint winner of the 1994 Historias Breves contest (a 35 mm short film competition organized by the Argentine Film Institute).

In 1997, Caetano co-directed his first feature, "Pizza, Beer and Cigarettes" ("Pizza, Birra y Faso") with Bruno Stagnaro. The film enjoyed great public and critic success in Argentina. The following year, thanks to the Fundación Antorchas Award, he made the short "The Expression of Desire" ("La Expresión del Deseo") and began work on his feature project "Bolivia".

Released in 2001, "Bolivia" received the Young Critics' Jury Award (Critics' Week) at Cannes; Best Latin American Picture Award at San Sebastian; Critics' Award at Rotterdam; Jury Special Mention at Huelva and the Fipresci Award at the London Film Festival, and established Caetano as one of the brightest lights of the new Argentinian cinema.

In 2002, his feature "A Red Bear" ("Un Oso Rojo") screened in the 2002 Cannes Directors' Fortnight, and received prizes at the International Festivals of Biarritz, La Habana (Special Jury Award at the 24th New Latin American International Film Festival) and the Lleida Latin American Film Festival. 2002 and 2003 were taken up with the radical TV series "Tombers" ("Tumberos") and "Catfight" ("Disputas").

In 2005 Caetano returned to Uruguay to shoot the mini-series "Uruguayos Campeones". The same year he directed a short film for inclusion in "18-J", a film about the 1994 AMIA tragedy.

NEVER AGAIN

On March 24, 1976, a military coup d'état overthrows the government of Isabel Perón, President of the Republic since the death of her husband. Under the 'National Reorganization Process' decree, the Junta, founded on 'the doctrine of national security' and controlled by Admiral Emilio Massera, General Orlando Agosti and Jorge Rafael Videla, resolves to eradicate Argentina's 'problems' by strictly military means. All civil authority mandates are declared null and void; the Assembly and the regional councils are summarily dissolved.

All democratic liberties are suppressed: political parties are outlawed and the press subjected to draconian censorship. Members of Parliament are 'relieved of their duties' and the members of the Supreme Court dismissed. The Junta replaces all these with 'trusted men'.

Special squads and commando units are formed with men taken from the armed forces. Their watch-word is to 'wage war on unpatriotic subversion', to hunt down all those suspected of 'insufficient dedication to the regime'.

"The struggle we are engaged in knows no natural or moral limits... it exists beyond good and evil"
- Lieutenant-Colonel Pascarelli.

Secret security units ('Task Forces') eliminate or interrogate their opponents ruthlessly: summary executions, torture, kidnappings. The 'statements' or 'proof' obtained, the so-called 'confessions' brutally extracted from the accused are judged irrefutable. A reign of controlled and methodically applied violence takes hold of the country.

"First we will kill all the subversives, then their collaborators, then the sympathisers, then the indifferent and finally the fearful"
- Général Ibérico Manuel Saint-Jean, Governor of Buenos Aires.

Repression now begins to show a new face. The term 'disappeared' (from the Spanish, *desaparecido*) is used to refer to the citizens snatched from their homes or places of work. Abductions replace arrests in good and due form, and the number of disappearances reaches epidemic proportions. Between 10,000 and 30,000 people 'disappear' between 1973 and 1983, not including hundreds of babies and children (born in secret prisons), taken from their natural families and adopted under false names by the military and their relatives. The majority of these children are still being sought by their families, the Mothers and Grandmothers of May Square.

On April 2, 1982, the Junta occupies the Falkland Islands, situated in the South Atlantic and until that moment under British rule. A victory will allow the military to seize back lost prestige and retain its grasp on power. However, the reaction of the British government swift and fierce, and Argentina surrenders two months later, with hundreds dead. This defeat signals the beginning of the end for the Junta, which is forced to call elections on October 30, 1983. Raul Alfonsín of the radical party wins the presidential ballot with 52% of the vote. His six year term begins on December 10, 1983.

A commission of enquiry into human rights violations under the dictatorship (CONADEP), directed by the writer Ernesto Sabato, makes its findings public in 1985 in a report unequivocally entitled 'Never Again'. Society learns with horror the extent of the revolting crimes perpetrated by the military. Despite this, and after numerous trials, the guilty are not sentenced. In December 1986, under pressure from the Generals still in their posts, the law of Punto Final ('Full Stop') suspends the proceedings against the military. And in June 1988, the law of Obediencia Debida ('Due Obedience') absolves those charged with repression of all responsibility. In November 1989, President Menem proclaims a general amnesty. The protests of the Mothers of the May Square are not heard.

It is not until the presidential term of Nestor Kirchner that the laws of Punto Final and Obediencia Debida are repealed by the Supreme Court, and the guilty sentenced.

To mark the 28th anniversary of the coup d'état, Kirchner visits ESMA, the naval academy, and a stark symbol of the atrocities committed during the dictatorship. On the way, the president visits the Army Military Academy, where, in front of the Generals, he orders their commander-in-chief to take down the portraits of Jorge Videla and Benito Bignone, the first and last presidents of the horrifying military Junta.

This gesture of humiliation is accompanied by words that continue to echo without end:

Ni olvido, ni perdón (Neither forget, nor forgive)

RODRIGO DE LA SERNA

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 1999 "El Mismo Amor, La Misma Lluvia" /
"Same Love, Same Rain"
Dir: Juan José Campanella
Condor Silver Award, Best Debut Performance
Luis Sandrini Award, Best Debut Performance
- 2000 "Nueces para el Amor" / "Nuts for Love"
Dir: Alberto Lecchi
- 2000 "Gallito Ciego"
Dir: Santiago Carlos Obes
El Acomodador Award, Best Leading Actor
Audience Award
Volver TV Silver Condor Award,
Best New Actor 2002
- 2002 "Diarios de Motocicleta" /
"The Motorcycle Diaries"
Dir: Walter Salles
BAFTA Awards, Best Performance by an
Actor in a Supporting Role, (UK)
Independent Spirit Awards, Best Debut
Performance, Los Angeles (USA)
Condor Award (Buenos Aires)
Clarín Award, Best Actor

PABLO ECHARRI

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

- 1997 "El Desvio" - Dir: Horacio Maldonado
- 1999 "Solo Gente" - Dir: Roberto Maiocco
Havana, Best Leading Actor for "Solo Gente"
Barcelona, Best Leading Actor for "Solo Gente"
- 1999 "Heroes Y Demonios"
Dir: Horacio Maldonado
- 1999 "Alma Mia" - Dir: Jorge Nisco
- 1999 "Plata Quemada" / "Burnt Money"
Dir: Marcelo Piñeyro
- 2001 "No Debes Estar Aquí" / "You Shouldn't Be Here"
Dir: Jacobo Rispa
- 2001 "Apasionados" / "Passionate People"
Dir: Juan Jose Jusid
- 2002 "El Septimo Arcangel"
Dir: Juan Bautista Stegnaro
- 2004 "Peligrosa Obsesion" - Dir: Raúl Rodríguez
- 2004 "El Metodo" / "The Method"
Dir: Marcelo Piñeyro

PRODUCTION

K&S FILMS

Founded by Oscar Kramer and Hugo Sigman, K&S FILMS Argentina, S.A. produces feature films both in Argentina and overseas. Its activities include the acquisition of publishing rights, the production of scripts and international co-productions.

FILMOGRAPHY

"El Camino de San Diego" / "The Road to San Diego" (2006) Directed by Carlos Sorin

"Crónica de una Fuga" / "Buenos Aires 1977"
Directed by Israel Adrián Caetano
Starring Rodrigo de la Serna ("The Motorcycle Diaries")

"On Probation" / "Tiempo de Valientes" (2005)
Directed by Damián Szifrón
Starring Diego Peretti and Luis Luque
Distributed in USA and Latin America by Twentieth Century Fox

"El Perro" / "Bombón, El Perro" (2004)
Directed by Carlos Sorin
Toronto Film Festival (2004)
FIPRESCI Award San Sebastián 2004
Distributed by Twentieth Century Fox

FILMOGRAPHY OF OSCAR KRAMER

"Kamchatka" (2002)
Directed by Marcelo Piñeyro
starring Cecilia Roth, Ricardo Darin
Argentina Entry for Best Foreign Film at the 2002 Oscars

"Plata Quemada" / "Burnt Money" (2000)
Directed by Marcelo Piñeyro
starring Leonardo Sbaraglia, Eduardo Noriega,
Pablo Echarri
(Officially Selected at the Venice, Toronto and London Festivals). Goya Award 2001 for Best Foreign Spanish-Speaking Film

"Corazón Iluminado" / "Foolish Heart" (1997)
Directed by Héctor Babenco
starring Miguel Angel Solá, Walter Quiróz, Norma Aleandro, María Luiza Mendonça and Xuxa Lopez
(Cannes 1998 Official Competition)

"El Impostor" / "The Impostor" (1997)
Directed by Alejandro Maci
"Coral de Plata" award at the 1998 Havana International Film Festival for Best Film, Best Photography and Best Cinematography
FIPRESCI Award - Puerto Rico Festival

"La Lección De Tango" / "The Tango Lesson" (1996)
Directed by Sally Potter
Official Opening of the 1997 Mar del Plata Festival International Film Festival where it won the "Ombú de Oro" award.
Distributed in the USA by Sony Classics

"De Eso No Se Habla" / "I Don't Want to Talk About It" (1992) Directed by María Luisa Bemberg
starring Marcello Mastroianni
(Venice 1993 Official Competition)
Distributed in the USA by Sony Classics

"La Peste" / "The Plague" (1991)
Directed by Luis Puenzo
starring William Hurt, Raúl Julia, Robert Duvall,
Sandrine Bonnaire and Jean-Marc Barr
(Venice 1992 Official Competition)

"Alambrado" (1990)
Directed by Marco Bechis

"Eversmile New Jersey" (1988)
Directed by Carlos Sorin
starring Daniel Day Lewis

"La Historia Oficial" / "The Official Story" (1985)
which won Argentina its first and only Oscar as Best Foreign Film in 1986
(Associate Producer)

INTERVIEW WITH ISRAEL ADRIÁN GAETANO

I was a child during the first years of the dictatorship. Thus I had generals for teachers and books written by the military, overseen by temporary presidents. I lived through the establishing of the dictatorship. Today, time having passed, I am aware of to what degree it rooted itself not only in me, but in my entire generation, which it marked profoundly. There is a past still very much present in this country.

I adapted Claudio Tamburrini's book 'Pase libre - la fuga de la Mansion Seré' with two scriptwriters, Esteban Student and Julián Loyola. We approached the story as those who knew, who had heard and seen, but who had not directly experienced torture, either closely or from a distance. It is therefore a story above all told by someone who knows his subject only through reconstruction and investigation. We visited Claudio Tamburrini at his home in Stockholm. We were also able to rely on the collaboration of Guillermo Fernandez, another of the four prisoners who escaped from Seré Mansion. These encounters had a vitally determining influence on the writing of the script.

The guiding principle of our adaptation was to stick as closely as possible to the theme of the book: survival. This is how we conceived **Buenos Aires 1977**: the story of those who survived horror, told like a horror movie, while taking care never to tip over into the realm of morbidity a narrative already so rooted in terror.

I must stress, what attracted me most strongly to the idea of this film was this story of survivors having escaped from hell. There was no need, at least as far as I was concerned, to paint a portrait of the dictatorship, but simply to use the framework in which the escape found its meaning and its force to be able to affect the viewer.

The foremost aesthetic decision was to find a high contrast image with non-saturated colours. To this end, we used the 'bleach bypass' technique (a process that avoids bleaching during the processing of the film). The image took on a much rawer texture, very grainy, with deep, deep blacks. Then there was the choice to film with hand-held camera, which gave the film an edgy, nervy quality that helps convey the protagonists' feelings to the audience. Close collaboration between the director of photography and the heads of design allowed scrupulous work on the tones and colours, the better to recreate the environment and feel we were seeking.

Another aesthetic choice was the use of 'split fields', which allows one to focus simultaneously on a character in close-up and another, several metres away, retaining the viewer's attention on all of them at once. The use of short focal lengths, above all in the early scenes in the house, and in the set-up of the escape, also contributed to magnifying the expressions of the actors, thereby allowing the audience to feel the internal tension of the protagonists, every step of the way.

Most difficult of all was finding the house. It was from the house that we structured everything else, in such a way that all would be coherent, and would serve equally cinematic requirements and those of historical verisimilitude. It was extremely painstaking work for the art director and designers, ensuring that the audience would not grow tired of this 'mansion' in which we had to film for five weeks. Shooting in a house very similar to the real-life Seré Mansion was vital for the actors, during rehearsals and during the shoot, providing an ideal setting in which each could enter his character.

Without any doubt, it's very special making a work based on real events, above all when you know that the protagonists will be sitting in the auditorium, watching their own story as spectators. It was immensely gratifying to see on their faces - and those of their families - as they were leaving the screening, genuine approval of what they had just seen.

INTERVIEW WITH RODRIGO DE LA SERNA

I was born on April 18, 1976, which is to say 24 days after the military coup. As a small child, of course, I wasn't aware of what we were living through, at least not on a conscious level. I had no conception of this tragedy, this silent war taking place in my country. Even so, I could feel it, in the general climate of fear and uncertainty. But I did not know, until much later, that we – Argentinians – were living through a war. Little by little, as I grew older, and with the arrival of democracy, I became aware of the real situation. At the age of 14, I demonstrated for the first time, against the amnesty. That's when I first took an active part in the fight. But, in a way, my entire life, from childhood on, prepared me to play the role of Claudio Tamburrini.

From this film and above all from the testimony of Claudio Tamburrini, I really took on board what had transpired. We still do not know what became of all the 30,000 people; we know the fates of only 10,000 of them - where they are, where they were buried, burnt, thrown into the sea. But what of the others? The civilian complicity? The CIA? The government received a great deal of logistical help with its programme of "disappearance". As yet, we possess none of this information. What Claudio Tamburrini proposes is that we benefit from the reopening of the military files by Nestor Kirschner to discover all this information. That they might provide ammunition against the reduced sentences granted, and tell us where, how, why. That the truth might be restored to a state of completeness. In a way, thirty years later, that I am playing the part of Claudio Tamburrini, an exceptional and controversial person for Argentinian society, is maybe a sign that we have at last grown up sufficiently to know the whole truth.

Unfortunately, I only met Claudio Tamburrini after the shoot, but it was an overwhelming encounter, and one I shall always remember. I had immersed myself in the study of his entire life, and most of all the most dramatic and significant period (the 120 days of illegal imprisonment in the Seré Mansion and the escape that followed), so to meet him and exchange ideas was incredible. A possibility that life has offered for which I will be eternally grateful.

Claudio Tamburrini was never a militant. At the time, there were certainly many true militants, very involved, armed, who were really at war. At no point did Claudio Tamburrini have anything to do with any war. In the film, the Military justify his abduction by their discovery of a placard at his home, dating from a student demonstration in 1973. Adrián tried to avoid all discussion or rhetoric when telling the story - a very smart move on his part,

as he escaped getting bogged down in political arguments, and cut right through to the essentials: the extraordinary situation lived through by those subjected to the irrational reality of torture, and the vital spirit that tore them from it and pushed them to escape it.

Without any doubt, the entire youth in the 70s was politicized. This was the best-educated generation since the universities were opened to the working classes in the 1940s. The coup d'état was a programme to eliminate the children of this generation, so hungry for change. We are still paying the price. As a child of this generation, I know it only too well.

Preparing physically for the role was very demanding. I had put on 15 kilos for Walter Salles' "The Motorcycle Diaries". And in **Buenos Aires 1977**, I had to play a professional footballer. So I began training, to become a footballer, like Claudio Tamburrini before his abduction. But the most difficult was what came afterwards: Claudio's total physical deterioration during his four months of imprisonment; his appalling diet and brutal mistreatment. As a result of this, his weight plummeted and his health was shattered. The whole process cost me dearly, it was an extremely methodical and rigorous regime, I submitted to an extremely strict daily programme of physical exercise. Luckily the whole process was well monitored.

Psychologically, I prepared as well as I could. I researched into the conditions of torture. I put myself with the greatest confidence in the hands of the director and my colleagues. I had scenes in mind, I fantasized about them, and they were resolved in a very fiery, expressive way. I feel at the end that I expressed Claudio's agony with great restraint. Happily, these fantasies are no longer in the film. I believe Adrián made a wise choice of when to withdraw his camera and safeguard the intimacy of the moment, not to force the audience to see what it could not bear to see.

It was vital to know that the story ended well. It brings hope to us all that Claudio survived and was able to testify. This invaluable testimony is without precedent in our country. Out of 30,000 who 'disappeared', there were only two escapes, that from the Seré Mansion, and one other. Therefore it was essential to be able to tell all that happened in that place.

Guillermo Fernández, one of the other escapees, was with us throughout the shoot. This was an invaluable help. He was there constantly, guiding and encouraging us. And not only that, he also acted in the film. It's a

moment of astonishing power. The real-life Guillermo Fernández plays the judge who condemned Guillermo Fernández, a moment that forcefully illustrates the schizophrenic situation in which we are living.

Every character in the film existed. Like the man played by Pablo Echarri, whom everyone called 'Huguito' but whose true identity remains unknown. This is the reality of our situation. He could be right by me, at this very moment, in the street, driving a cab, or working as a security guard, and I'd have no idea. A dangerous situation, right?! He's at liberty, walking among us, and we have no way of recognizing him. That's what's so serious. Claudio was a witness in the trials of the Military in 1985, but they were trials of the most visible faces, the most exposed: the commanders-in-chiefs and other senior officers. But as for the entire labour force that implemented the grisly plan, we don't know their names... and there were a lot of them. That's why I repeat this idea of 'the whole truth'. Who were they? Where are they?

Adrián and I talk the same language, in every sense. We like the same sorts of films and we like to talk about the same things. We share the same affinities, cinematic and ideological. I hope to work with him again, and I see him not only as a director, but as a comrade. His film is unique. You can't define it: a thriller, an action movie, a political film? But it resonates inside you. In Argentina, the film is touching a lot of raw nerves. And I hope it will contribute to re-establishing the truth, so that generations who have so far been unaware of this tragedy that took place so recently will hear it, as well as those who have never seen a film about the subject.

It's a double responsibility telling the story of someone who will mark the lives of so many. Because that person is alive and he will see our work. It's not only a question of how you view that person, but also how that person views his own life. So the most important criticism, for me – in fact the only one – is that of Claudio Tamburrini: what did he think of my interpretation of the most determinant period of his life? Happily, he was very pleased. He loves **Buenos Aires 1977**, he is hugely proud of it. I know how much the film moves him. This reassures me, and lifts an enormous weight from my shoulders: next I will dedicate myself to my record of popular Argentinian music, "Tango, Milonga and Candombe".