

# the devil smokes

(and saves  
the burnt matches  
in the same box)

A FILM BY ernesto martínez bucio



MANDARINACINE, EFICINE, EL INSTITUTO MEXICANO DE CINEMATOGRAFÍA, EL FONDO PARA LA PRODUCCIÓN CINEMATOGRAFICA DE CALIDAD PRESENTS THE DEVIL SMOKES (AND SAVES THE BURNT MATCHES IN THE SAME BOX)  
A FILM BY ERNESTO MARTÍNEZ BUCIO WITH MARIAPAU BRAVO AVIÑA, RAFAEL NIETO MARTÍNEZ, REGINA ALEJANDRA, LAURA URIBE ROJAS, DONOVAN SAID, CARMEN RAMOS, BERNARDO GAMBOA AND MICAELA GRAMAJÓ  
SCREENPLAY BY JOSÉ MIGUEL ENRÍQUEZ PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR MARCO HERNÁNDEZ CALVO EDITOR ERNESTO MARTÍNEZ BUCIO, ODEI ZABALETA AND KAREN PLATA SECOND UNIT ISABEL MUÑOZ COTA AND JORGE LEAL PRODUCTION DESIGNER ANA J. BELLIDO  
CASTING DIRECTOR MICHELLE BETANCOURT DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ODEI ZABALETA EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ERNESTO MARTÍNEZ BUCIO, ODEI ZABALETA AND KAREN PLATA PRODUCED BY CARLOS HERNÁNDEZ VÁZQUEZ, GABRIELA GAVICA MARRUFO AND ALEJANDRO DURÁN  
WRITTEN BY KAREN PLATA AND ERNESTO MARTÍNEZ BUCIO DIRECTED BY ERNESTO MARTÍNEZ BUCIO

# main cast and crew

Mandarina Cine presents

**THE DEVIL SMOKES** (AND SAVES THE BURNT MATCHES IN THE SAME BOX)

A film by **Ernesto Martínez Bucio**

DIRECTED BY Ernesto Martínez Bucio  
WRITTEN BY Karen Plata & **Ernesto** Martínez Bucio  
STARRING Mariapau Bravo Aviña, Rafael Nieto Martínez,  
Regina Alejandra, Laura Uribe Rojas, Donovan Said,  
Carmen Ramos, Micaela Gramajo & Bernardo Gamboa

PRODUCED BY Carlos Hernández Vázquez, Gabriela Gavica  
& Alejandro Durán

PRODUCTION COMPANY Mandarin Cine

CINEMATOGRAPHY Odei Zabaleta

CASTING DIRECTOR Michelle Betancourt

PRODUCTION DESIGN Ana J. Bellido

EDITING Ernesto Martínez Bucio, Odei Zabaleta & Karen Plata

SOUND DESIGN José Miguel Enríquez

SOUND MIXER Isabel Muñoz Cota & Jorge Leal

## info

Country: **Mexico**

Language: **Spanish**

Format: **DCP**

Aspect Ratio: **1.55:1**

Sound: **5.1**

Frame Rate: **24 fps**

Running time: **97 min**

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# story

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Mexico City, mid-90s. After the sudden disappearance of their parents, five siblings are left in the care of their grandmother. As they struggle to survive, the line between reality and something darker begins to blur. The grandmother, tormented by strange visions and rising fears, grows more distant, while the children's grip on their own perceptions starts to unravel.

Following a violent confrontation with their neighbors, the siblings retreat further into isolation, cutting them off from the outside world.



# director's statement

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*There is a Chinese proverb that says,  
Brush cannot write two characters with the same  
stroke,  
And yet  
that is exactly what a good mistake does.*

Anne Carson.

This film is not one story, but many. It was born from the mind of Karen Plata several years ago. We wrote and rewrote it together a thousand times, maybe more. We explored our memories, love, fear, and the imagination of childhood. *I want to know if it's possible to make a film as if we were writing a book of poetry*, Karen said. And I thought it should look like a family photo album. We searched for lost memories. We carefully collected them and completed them with our imagination:

When I was a child, I was always afraid of the Devil, and yet I preferred to sleep close to him—he lived behind the curtains. The closet scared me more because that's where The Dead Man came from. One day, Mom and Dad left and took a long time to come back. Neither of them knew the other had left, too. At the back of the house, there was a water well. The water would be cut off at 4 PM, but we had the well. The neighbors gave us mean looks; they didn't like us, but I never knew why.

These memories are threads that knot together in shared desire, formed through sacrifice and loss. We have to lose to gain—or at least, to hold onto the hope that we might gain something.

The challenge has been to maintain the curiosity of not knowing whether this is the beginning or the end of the journey. My aim has not been to simply transfer what was written to the screen, but to transform that language, to allow the images, sounds, and bodies to take the lead. Their texture, their hardness, their fragility. To uncover, within the makeup of its own matter, its truest essence: imperfection.

During the process, I applied some kind of rules or guides:

Count the parts, never the whole. Don't reconstruct the space. Memories resemble memories, fragments glued together with imagination. Dig into the gaps. Avoid metaphor. Materialize. Deny cause-and-effect without abandoning consequence. Let things unfold. Work hard without knowing exactly why. The horizon isn't important, you just need to keep walking. Seek the honest mistake and allow it to exist. Preserve it, nurture it, and let it grow without fear. Bury fear. Play. Laugh. Cry. Dream. Find the good mistake. Fail better.

**Ernesto Martínez Bucio**

# production note

*The Devil Smokes* is the first feature film by Ernesto Martínez Bucio. His previous short films premiered at Cannes, San Sebastián, and Rotterdam. We have followed Ernesto's journey to his feature film debut, having produced some of his previous short films.

Ernesto has always maintained an auteur vision in his work. In this film, he delves into the relationships between siblings, exploring them through innocence and intimacy. He examines the construction of fears—those silent, shared fears that take root in childhood. Fears that are inherited from generation to generation.

The film employs a raw visual language, with a handheld camera that “chases” the characters through their everyday lives and their imagination, combined with an observant and confident editing style. Ernesto plays with temporal jumps and elements of the era that add texture, personality, and character to the film. Fantasy diverges from naturalism through sound design and the actors' tone, while humor acts as a counterpoint throughout the film, balancing drama and comedy.

One of the greatest challenges was directing five children, most of whom had no prior acting experience. To prepare the young actors, a specialized acting workshop was conducted by Casting Director and Acting Coach Michelle Betancourt. This was essential in achieving profound and genuine emotional states, reaching unique places that are etched not only onto the screen but also into the memory of the audience.

Director of Photography Odei Zabaleta, who has two previous feature films that premiered in Venice, has collaborated with Ernesto on most of his past projects. He has mastered natural lighting and camera operation. For this film, he designed a structure around the main location, a kind of cage that allowed him to filter light from the outside. This setup kept the set free of cables and rigging, creating an open space where actors could move freely without obstacles.

The 5.1 sound mix was crafted by Carlos Cortés, Oscar winner for *Sound of Metal*. His sensitivity ultimately assembled this film into a unique piece. The film's musical theme, *Eres*, performed by Spanish singer Massiel, contributes a nostalgic and tender tone—like a mother singing to her children from afar.

This film is a love song—one of nostalgia, innocence, belonging, and the most primal instinct *chant* of survival.

Carlos Hernández & Gabriela Gavica

# about the director

Ernesto Martínez Bucio

His mother says the doctors had to use forceps when he was born back in 1983 in Uruapan, Mexico. He is a film director, screenwriter, and editor who holds a BA in Communication Sciences from ITESO, a BA in Filmmaking from CCC, and an MA in Filmmaking from EOZE. After spending so much time studying filmmaking, one might think he learns slowly—or perhaps he just enjoys being in school. His short films have premiered at prestigious festivals, including Cannes' Cinéfondation, Cairo, San Sebastián, and Rotterdam. He has received two grants from the **National** Fund for Culture and the Arts and is an alumnus of Berlinale Talents. He loves road cycling and hamburgers.

## filmography

- El Futuro (short, 2019)
- Las Razones del Mundo (short, 2016)
- La Madre (short, 2012)
- Cenizas (short, 2011)

# world sales

**Bendita Film Sales**  
+34 922 926 541  
Luis Renart  
sales@btafilms.com  
Jorge Blanch  
festivals@btafilms.com  
www.btafilms.com



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## international press

**Marijana Harder**  
+49 (0)177 79 42 871  
mail@marijanaharder.com  
www.marijanaharder.com