



La maldad

Evilness

Joshua Gil

Producer Fabiola De la Rosa, Joshua Gil. **Production companies** Perro Negro Cine (Puebla, Mexico); Parábola (Distrito Federal, Mexico). **Director** Joshua Gil. **Screenplay** Joshua Gil. **Director of photography** Cesar Salgado. **Production design** Guillermo Vidal. **Sound** Jorge Rodríguez Sánchez. **Music** Galo Durán. **Sound design** Sergio Díaz. **Editor** León Felipe Gonzáles, Joshua Gil.

Cast Rafael Gil Morán (Man 1), Raymundo Delgado Muñoz (Man 2).

DCP, colour. 74 min. Spanish.

Premiere 7 February 2015, Berlinale Forum

An old man in the country wants to make a film, the story of a whole life told across twelve songs, of a love lost and a family torn asunder, all guided by the logic of dreams. But even if the script is the best in the world, this film won't be easy to make, as actors aren't cheap and Mexico City holds the purse strings.

But maybe his film is the one we're already watching. The same sense of longing is certainly there, in the emptied out landscapes, the mist of dewy mornings and the unquenchable fire. We don't hear all twelve songs and it's only the old man that sings, but each one somehow evokes all the others. Yet there's more to this film than just love and longing. As he and his friend wander the fields, chew their food or merely rest their weary bones, we could be watching a documentary, a stark portrait of growing old in the country. And the political is never far away either, as assassinations and corruption still reverberate even here. Or perhaps let's just settle for a road movie, in which one man disappears into the fog and another makes his way to the big city: an important meeting, an impromptu demonstration, sudden gunfire and a fade to black.

James Lattimer

Poetry and politics

What does independent filmmaking mean to me? Freedom.

La maldad combines two basic themes: poetry and politics. It took eight years to bring together all the elements needed to make my debut movie, *La maldad*, possible. And it wasn't until 2012, the year of the presidential election, that everything came together for its production.

Friendship was the excuse, and filmmaking the true purpose of a story about the suffering caused by constant uncertainty. As the cold air blows, an ethereal atmosphere is observed on screen, in which the clouds metaphorically touch the ground to show a rarely observed Mexican reality.

We shot for six weeks over the course of six months. We filmed for only a few days a week because of the main protagonist's terminal illness, and we used only natural light conditions. We were able to tell this story only with the incredible support of professional colleagues, friends and family. Once again: Freedom.

The lost love that the main character suffers because of the woman who abandoned him is the primary inspiration of the story in *La maldad*. I cling to my love of cinema, and together with the characters, I seek to reach the end of the story, no matter how painful or real it is.

Joshua Gil

"Right now we are going through a small revolution"

How did you come up with the idea for La maldad?

Joshua Gil: *La maldad* was born from the true story of the protagonist Rafael Gil, a curious character who lives in a remote and poor town in Mexico. He described himself as a composer, singer and writer. He wrote an autobiographical screenplay, which in his own words was a film the light of which has never been seen. This project of his, which never came to fruition, is the driving force behind our film.

Can La maldad be described as a documentary, since Rafael Gil is the protagonist of his own story?

Fiction was always our goal. It may be based on a true story, but my search for a narrative point of view and our mode of production was always with the clear idea of creating a fictional film. In fact, the decision to work with Rafael is grounded more in his expressive and singular character than in the fact that he was the protagonist of the story that is mentioned in the film. At the same time, we were in a situation where reality influenced fiction. As a whole, the production team and I were clear on these conditions. We had to be constantly aware of the things that happened not only to the character, but to us as well. In that sense, the illness that afflicted Rafael defined everything. Throughout the principal photography his health worsened, and we ended up incorporating this as a major dramatic element in the film.

How did you get acquainted with Rafael?

I had known him for a few years. He is a distant relative of mine. Nevertheless, the last time I saw him before the film was at some point in my childhood. The idea of working with him came to me when I was developing the project of my first film. I remembered him, and I was struck by the notion that he could be a great actor. With time, I got to know him better. When I discovered the stories he'd hidden in songs he'd written, I decided

that he was the film subject I was looking for. The more I knew him, the more I was interested.

How was it working with non-actors?

The challenge is that there is no method. Every person has his own language, and his own way of understanding the scene and his work in front of the camera. Each of them had their own pace and demanded different things from me. That was the most difficult task; we had to figure it out on a daily basis, in each scene. We could not even control the beginning and the end of a shot. We depended on them and the moments that suddenly arose spontaneously. Another challenge with Rafael was the fact that he lost his hearing years before the film. Basically we had to communicate through cards and signals. With time we learned to adapt in every sense.

How was the shooting process?

It was a very demanding film to make. Understanding the particular needs of our film, we divided the production process into five stages. We had to organise the shooting around events that we could not control and that had their own timing, like the fog or the burning off during the harvest season. We also had to organise our movement through Mexico. To accomplish my vision, we had to extend the production process across four different states of Mexico, because every scene demanded a different climate and atmosphere.

These strenuous conditions demanded a flexible crew that could adapt to any condition, and it also put pressure on us to finance the film ourselves so we could shoot without having to account for deadlines or economic pressures.

Would you work using the same process of production?

Every film has its own complexity. I think that the experience of *La maldad* was unique. I have always understood that *La maldad* had its own production system that grew from the necessities, the screenplay and the actors. Nevertheless, I recognise aspects of the production process that I would change and others that I definitely will preserve. Documentary and fiction are two things that I'm interested in working with, but above all, I think that telling stories from contemporary Mexico is indispensable, and this is what I am currently focused on.

What do you want to do next?

There are a lot of subjects to explore, but right now I feel the urge to expose the suffering and lack of justice in my country. I think there is too much pain in the air flowing around, but at the same time you can sense the love and solidarity still alive in the people of Mexico. Right now we are going through a small revolution in Mexico, and I want to contribute a film to the cause.

Source: production



Joshua Gil was born in Puebla, Mexico in 1976. He studied cinematography at the Escuela Superior de Cinema i Audiovisuals de Catalunya (ESCAC) in Barcelona, Spain. After working as a director of photography for several years, in 2007 he began directing documentaries, commercials, and television series. *La maldad* is his first feature film.