



# Maquinaria Panamericana

## Panamerican Machinery

Joaquín del Paso

**Producer** Joaquín del Paso, Susana Bernal, Jaime Romandía, Joakim Ziegler, Pawel Tarasiewicz, Santiago de la Paz Nicolau, Marcin Malatyński. **Production companies** Amondo Films America (Mexico-City, Mexico), Black María (Mexico-City, Mexico), Mantarraya (Mexico-City, Mexico), Terminal (Mexico-City, Mexico), Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía (Mexico-City, Mexico), Amondo Films Europe (Warsaw, Poland), Polish National Film School (Łódź, Poland). **Director** Joaquín del Paso. **Screenplay** Joaquín del Paso, Lucy Pawlak. **Director of photography** Fredrik Olsson. **Editor** Raúl Barreras. **Music** Christian Paris. **Sound design** Santiago Arroyo, Santiago de la Paz. **Sound** Santiago Arroyo. **Production design** Lucy Pawlak, Paulina Sanchez. **Costumes** Yupanqui Ramos.

**With** Javier Zaragoza (Jesus Carlos), Ramiro Orozco (Ignacio), Irene Ramirez (Soledad), Edmundo Mosqueira (Celestino), Delfino López (Delfino), Cecilia García (Juanita), Cesar Panini (Goldenboy), Javier Camacho (Rubio), Israel Ruiz (Tonatiuh), Regina DuPacci (Arancha).

DCP, colour. 88 min. Spanish.

**Premiere** 14 February 2016, Berlinale Forum

**World sales** Luxbox

When you work for Maquinaria Panamericana, you're part of the family. It's hard to think of a better workplace: a convenient location next to Mexico City Airport, a generous boss in the form of Don Alejandro, spacious premises and whole decades of proud company tradition. Maybe that's why everything looks a bit cluttered these days, there are almost too many happy memories to hold on to. But that's no impediment to work, all the countless files, computers and paraphernalia are like trusted companions. Working here is more about spending time together anyway, chatting, joking, keeping the company spirit alive, productivity and efficiency be damned. Sometimes the future arrives without notice. Don Alejandro dies and with him the illusion, he's been paying the wages out of his own pocket and the company is bankrupt. How do you react to a death in the family, to the end of an era? You lock the gates tightly, you look for solutions, you process your grief, you drink until you no longer can, you tolerate no dissension. Change can feel so surreal: the banging of an iron rod, the ceremonial washing of a corpse, water spurting up from under the asphalt. It's going to be a long night...

*James Lattimer*

## Collective panic

I wanted to make a movie that showed this closed microcosm that I know very well, since both my father and grandfather sold construction machines all their lives. The film is like a reminder of a world that is about to disappear and also a satirical comment on the current state of things in my country and around the world. The situation in Mexico is so fragile, economically and politically, that people live in a constant state of fear. We desperately hold on to what we have earned, and just the idea of a new crisis leads to collective panic. We are a society standing on the edge, willing to do everything to stop the disaster, but paradoxically, our attempts to organise as a group always lead to more chaos and social polarisation – in my point of view, the great elements of a tragi-comedy.

I am interested in analysing the collective panic that is provoked by the loss of stability, the paralysing fear that hits people when they lose their jobs, and the constant fear of change that reoccurs in each generation. Work has become such an important activity that life without it is instantly perceived as a failure. Humans chain themselves to certain tasks and certain routines; so the end or disappearance of these routines can result in a major existential crisis.

This film has many characters employed in different areas of the company and each individual experiences the loss of their job and the death of their boss in a different way. Some try to pretend that nothing has changed, while others are forced by circumstance to confront elements of their past that have remained buried for many years.

**Maquinaria Panamericana** is dedicated to the workers of Maquinaria Panamericana, the heavy machinery company of the title, and it talks about their fears, desires and obsessions and their struggle to adapt to this upcoming, 'neo-capitalist order'. This is a film about the passing of time and about the panic that changes over time can provoke.

Joaquín del Paso

## "Any attempt to organise this thoroughly rigged system ends up just creating more chaos"

*Instead of one or just a few protagonists, Maquinaria Panamericana is about a large group of people...*

**Joaquín del Paso:** I lived in Poland for six years to attend film school in Łódź before moving back to Mexico. At that time, I had been writing another feature with a completely different setting but that was also about a group of people rather than one character. But it was far more complex and thus more complicated to raise money for an unknown director who was also schooled in Poland, which is probably the strangest place for a Mexican to go and study. So I had to choose between trying to make that film, which could have taken years and finally not even come together, or I could make what would become **Maquinaria Panamericana**, which is close to me and close to my life, and felt natural in all senses. In any case, this film is still a first look at things I would like to explore in other films.

*You studied film in Poland instead of repairing and renting out heavy equipment. So how is the film close to you and your life?*

When I came back to Mexico after graduation, the location of **Maquinaria Panamericana** literally just presented itself. My

family used to own a company like that before the crisis in 1994 and now my father works in this place where we filmed, which is practically the same. As you see in the film, it is located right next to the airport and when my father came to pick me up, we went there to pick up his laptop and get his car and as we were entering the gate, I had this huge flashback to my childhood, nothing seemed to have changed. On the way back home, my father told me they would be destroying the place in four months, so if there's anything I wanted to do there, I had to be quick. Thankfully, it later expanded to eight months because they were nice enough to let us shoot the film there but I had to do it quickly anyway.

I just took that risk. Places like this around the world belong to a different era and are disappearing fast. If you divided capitalism in two parts, this would belong to the 'Old Testament of Capitalism,' and the 'New Testament' would be what we have right now. Their way of doing business is vanishing. I thought it was a very interesting subject to show and explore. Despite all the limitations we had, we managed to shoot the film on 35mm, which I'm very proud of, and which helps suggest that the film, too, is stuck in time.

*How did you develop the screenplay and storytelling strategy?*

I'm interested in the effects of change and in the collective side of things. I wanted to make a film about a company that's forced to shut down and where everyone loses their jobs and explore how this affects the collective; a film not for the masses, but about the masses. In the end, when you talk about collective panic or collective grief, it's a very different phenomenon than individual grief or panic. I wanted it to be a film where you don't connect to one single person but get to experience how a whole group reacts and copes with things, where you take a step back in order to get a multitude of perspectives, instead of just one.

*Any idea where the fascination with groups and collectives comes from?*

My interest in the collective has something to do with being Mexican, I guess. This country is so damaged and depressed on so many levels that there's always a question of why the collective, the people as a whole, don't do something about it. How come we allow our own policemen to be kidnappers and our politicians to steal from us? Why doesn't the collective respond, go out onto the streets? The fascinating thing is that any attempt to organise this thoroughly rigged system ends up just creating more chaos.

*One of the characters in the film organises collective grief counselling sessions and I got the sense that the film itself is loosely structured around the different stages of grief.*

Although the Kübler-Ross theory [of the five stages of dying, -ed.] is quite recent, and just a theory, there's an element of universality in it, because, as one of the characters points out, as humans we have certain behavioural patterns. When we started writing the film, we actually did follow the stages of the cycle quite closely; first shock, then depression, euphoria, anger, and so on. But now, I think the film is only subconsciously structured that way and that's because I edited the film based on concrete notions of mood; let's go back to 'depression' or 'happiness' or whatever.



*You cast mostly non-professionals and a few character actors ...*

Actually, most of the people in the film worked in that company. Delfino, the faithful worker who checks the pipes every morning, has worked there since day one. Naturally, I couldn't use everyone because that would've stopped the company from running, since we were shooting inside the offices and people were actually working around us. It was good for getting extras for twenty minutes in this or that shot and people were very helpful. But I needed some characters all the time, so some of them are played by professional or amateur actors. When I started to mix the actors and non-actors on set, I realised that it helped to have such an eclectic group, composed of eighty per cent first-timers. Sometimes the professional actors would be the ones that injected energy into a shot, at other times the non-actors would inject this natural magic into a scene, just by being themselves, and by being able to feel at home in that environment

*You talk about 'transformation over time' in your statement and obviously it's an important theme in the film. What's interesting is that 'transformation over time' is almost like a definition of cinema itself.*

One of the basic ideas of the film is to talk about how people, things, and spaces experience the passing of time, and fall into a perfect system where everything seems to co-habitate perfectly, and how it's possible that in a few hours, this harmony is broken and destroyed forever. That fascinates me. I'm pretty nostalgic, I like old things, I like to see them transform or disappear, I like to imagine life without the things that we like the most and which we feel will last forever. I try to find out what meaning these things had to other people, like these offices, these desks and chairs, these yellow machines and dusty warehouses and these people coexisting next to each other every day for so many years.

*Interview: Adriano DiPietro*



Joaquín del Paso was born in Mexico City in 1986. He completed courses in film directing and scriptwriting at the International Film and TV School in Cuba (EICTV) before earning a master's degree at the Polish Film School in Łódź. Del Paso is a co-founder of Amondo Films, a film collective based in Warsaw, Delhi and Mexico City. In addition, he works as a cinematographer for fiction and documentary films. Joaquín del Paso currently lives in Mexico City. *Maquinaria Panamericana* is his first film.

## Films

2007: *Diálogo sobre una imagen / Dialogue About an Image* (3 min., co-directed by Martyna Starosta). 2008: *The Absolute Truth of Thomas Schviefel* (21 min., co-directed by Lucy Pawlak). 2009: *Czarna góra / Black Mountain* (5 min.). 2012: *Dream of San Juan* (45 min., co-directed by Jan Pawel Trzaska). 2013: *Syjamski / Siamese* (26 min.). 2016: *Maquinaria Panamericana / Panamerican Machinery*.