



OFFICIAL SELECTION

# DIAS DE GRACIA

Directed by  
EMERSON GOLT



SELECTION



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
FESTIVAL DE CANNES

# DIAS DE GRACIA

a film by  
Everardo Gout

2h08

Midnight Screening  
May 17<sup>th</sup>

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*“La vida no es como la vives  
sino como la cuentas.”*

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

*Life is not how you live it,  
but how you tell it*

## **Note d'intention**

*The Soccer World Cup happens every four years and lasts for a month. During those thirty days, everybody follows the games, including cops and criminals. Even in Mexico...*

*In Mexico, everything is unstable and unpredictable. I wanted to put this at the center of the film. When you live in a place where you're confronted to crime on a daily basis, it leaves a mark, you are scarred. This movie is my scar. It conjures up all the stories I've been told. I have a tremendous love for my country. But I also have this terrible anguish about the violence spreading across Mexico City. I wish this country would heal from it.*

*I spent four years investigating crime in Mexico City, and the way lives are shattered forever by this violence. The question is not whether one is good or evil, but about the range of emotions involving love, hate, murder, suicide, friendship, betrayal, loyalty. We make choices. Good choices at first can turn out to be bad in the end. Wonderful people can turn into villains. Sometimes the hero becomes the "bad guy". I'm interested in that switch. What are the reasons to cross the line? On which side do the victims stand? Does violence always generate violence? Can sorrow lead to grace?*

*I put all these questions in the film.*

**Everardo Gout**

# Synopsis

Mexico City.

2002, 2006, 2010.

A cop. A hostage. A city.

Corruption, violence, revenge.

3 lives, through 30 days and 3 soccer world cups.

3 ways to fight for survival...

## **Everardo Gout**

*Screenwriter - Director*

### **Interview**

#### **How did you become a film director ?**

I've always wanted to work in cinema. I'm from a rather literary family, and when I was a kid, I contemplated being a writer. But I quickly realized that it was images that I had in mind, not words. So, very early on, I would be an intern on shoots, doing odd jobs, running errands, that's how I learned, that's how I got my foot in the door. My senior year in high school I got the opportunity to shoot a short film, it was a fiction, at my school. It was my first real experience, the first time a proper audience actually saw my work. It gave me confidence. Later on, I launched a production company specialized in commercials and videos. I had assumed it would bring me closer to being a film director, but in fact it had the reverse effect, it took me away from that goal.

#### **What was the tipping point ?**

When my wife became pregnant with our daughter it forced me to question myself : "What am I gonna say to my daughter ? That her father produces music videos ? I've always wanted to be a director, it's time I get on with it."

I started out writing the script. In it, I put my questioning and my fears : fear of the violence that strikes my beloved country, fear that one of my loved ones could be taken away from me and kidnapped. What's worse under those circumstances : to be inside, as a prisoner, or to be outside, lost, without knowing

how to save the other ? I've always wondered about the bond between a hostage and his abductor. I have a friend who managed to convince his captor to let him go. Very often they are kids who are exploited. Finally, I wanted to talk about corruption within the police. How does it work ? Paradoxically enough, so many of them enter the system with high ideals. But in Mexico, wages are so pathetic, cops are so ill-equipped, psychologically, that it's tough to resist people's hatred and the pressure of money.

### **How did you get the idea for the three different time-periods, the three World Cups ?**

I like a movie to be both entertaining and complex. I wanted the audience to be swept away by the film, but also to think it over after walking out of the theater. Therefore, I needed an elaborate form, in order to take the spectators a bit off-track.

A soccer World Cup is a momentum, a universal event, it creates maximum stress and commotion. Since I had three storylines, the cop, the kidnapped, and the hostage's wife, I needed three separate events to get the rhythm going and in that case, what's better than a World Cup ? When you add up fear and football to the mix, it enables you to raise the adrenaline...

### **First segment - 2002 : the cop**

Lupe, a good guy with principles, an idealist, plunges deep into corruption way beyond his control. Through him, we discover how the system works and how one can be swayed.

In general, with kidnappings, we realize cops are always getting mixed up in corruption.

It's the segment we shot first. It was the most complicated because it was the one requiring the most sets. We spent the first day in the Fortress, a maze of narrow streets where you can only walk. At the heart of it, there's an old church and a football field. Before the shoot, the actor who plays Lupe went to the police academy. It lasts for four months. He only revealed the truth to his colleagues on graduation day. During the training, his patrol participated in an operation, which we see at the end of the film, while the end credits are rolling. He's not playing, he really is in the line of fire.

I love this actor. I hope this role will open all the right doors for him.

### **Second segment - 2006 : the hostage**

I had noticed Carlos Bardem in "La zona". He was the first Spanish actor who was really believable as someone who lives in Mexico. He is usually cast to play the bad guy, but I thought he had a beautiful expression. It's a tricky part. His face is hidden, he is tied-up, he has to stay motionless. We shot all his scenes in two weeks. It's the last segment we shot. The kid who plays Iguana has been wonderful. He was only fourteen, but he made me realize I had to pick a younger Iguana than I had previously planned, in order to be more realistic.



It's his first real movie-part. I think Kristian is incredible, tender and strong.

### **Third segment - 2010 : the hostage's wife**

I wanted to show that family stories, whether you're rich or poor, are never simple. Susana is an intelligent and cultured woman, who lives in an artistic and privileged environment. Her husband's kidnapping is a rude awakening. She discovers her life was all smoke and mirrors, that he had lied to her about almost everything. But she saves him in the end, and she's the one who will come out stronger from this ordeal.

Dolores Heredia is an actress I've always respected. She was perfect for this character, who is both attractive and dangerous. She really shows us how much women are the strength of a family. Dolores threw her heart and soul into her character.

### **How long did it take to shoot the film ?**

There were several interruptions, but all in all, it took nine and a half weeks. We shot with two cameras, I was holding one of them because I wanted to be thrown in the middle of the action, with the actors. I told my crew : "Follow the actors, whatever their moves, I want to be able to film at 360°, so please no marks on the ground and no projectors in their field of vision." They've been heroic...

**To each segment, its own filming style, its own composer...**

Exactly. The idea was to give the audience some awareness that they were wading through three distinct storylines, three distinct time-periods, but on a subliminal level. It's not filmed in the same way. The music is not the same. The format of the image changes. These are all clues. They're there if the spectator wants to notice them ; if not, it doesn't matter, everything becomes clear in the end...

In 2002 the style is more on edge, the music is more brutal, and the light is harsher, expressing heat, tension and violence.

In 2006, the light is very dim, tension is in the air, not so much in the camera movements. It's a war of nerves. The atmosphere is more raw, more realistic.

In 2010, Susana is filmed in fragments, with reflections. It's the most stylized. We only filmed her face, simply, towards the end, when she finally takes control over her life. The music is softer, wider. It expresses expectations.

At the end, in each segment, all the preconceived notions we could have had at the beginning of the film are dissolved. None of the characters belong to the pigeon-holes we had projected upon them at first.

### **Who are the three composers ?**

For the 2002 segment, I worked with Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. I had loved their work on “The Proposition” and “The Assassination of Jesse James by the coward Robert Ford”. They created a piece which superbly integrates sounds, noises, urban and animal backgrounds, that could have only been composed by them.

For the 2006 segment, I was lucky enough to have met Atticus Ross before he won the Oscar for his “The Social Network” score. He worked on the feeling of fear for the most part, on something more visceral, more primal.

For the 2010 segment, I was able to collaborate with the Japanese composer Shigeru Umebayashi, who worked on “In the mood for love”, one of my favourite films. He is a marvellous man ; his music was the quietest and the most sophisticated of the three.

And in order to tie the three together, there are three versions of the same song : the world-famous “Summertime”, sung by three women : Nina Simone, Janis Joplin, and Scarlett Johansson, singing vocals in a cover by Massive Attack.

### **Where does your bond with France come from ?**

I have French origins on my father’s side, which date back from a few generations. But it’s mostly my mother who loves French culture. She’s the one

who decided I should go to “Le lycée français” in Mexico (a high school with and for French expatriates, originally). I’ve been speaking French ever since. France is really my second home.

For this film, I found my theme, the strength to go through with the project and the people who believed in me in Mexico, and I found the other half of the equation in France, an incredible family, a team who supported my ideas and enabled me to never give up : a French editor, a French mixer, French coproducers and even a French colourist.

**What do you want to say to your audience before they discover the film?**

Relax, enjoy yourselves ! I had fun anticipating the spectators’ reactions. I did everything to shake them, to move them, to take them on a roller-coaster ride. Making a movie is offering a journey, holding out one’s hand with a smile.

## Biography

Everardo Gout studied film at the “Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos” in Mexico City, at the New York Film Academy and at the Hollywood Film Institute.

He has produced two Mexican feature films “Matame Amor” and “Piedras Verdes”, and more than twenty short films, documentaries, one of them being focused on the 2006 Soccer World Cup, as well as commercials and music videos. In 2007, he was nominated for a Grammy for the music video “When you were young” by the band The Killers.

After shooting “M”, a short film awarded several times in the film festival circuit, he established the production company Casa Buñuel in Mexico City in 2008, in order to produce and shoot “Days of Grace”, his first feature film.

## The French team

### **Hervé Schneid**

*Editor*

“When Everardo contacted me to work on “Dias de Gracia”, he showed me a few clips from his own cut. I was entirely won over. In a matter of seconds I knew he was a great filmmaker. And then, over a platter of seafood, I also discovered an epicurean. An ideal beginning...

The following weeks were intense and exciting. Editing with Everardo never gets tedious or boring. New ideas keep flowing, punctuated by fits of laughter. My daily mission was actually to channel this profusion of ideas, which were all more creative than the next. His quest for perfection and his listening skills enabled us to experience moments of “grace” in the editing room.

The life of an editor is made up of meetings. Some quickly go beyond mere artistic collaborations and turn into deep friendships. It’s definitely what happened on “Dias de Gracia” !”

## **Vincent Arnardi**

### *Mixer*

“One of the great joys of working in this industry is to immerse oneself into the filmmakers’ creative world. Once again, I was lucky enough to cross path with a very talented young Mexican director, gifted with boundless imagination, exactly what I love and look for. He’s the type of person who knows the art of making you rise to your level of incompetence and you hope never to find it.

Throughout our intense collaboration, I discovered a generous man, with a great sense of teamwork and sharing, a dream come true for a technician like me. Once again it was a confirmation that cultural, age and language differences are to be treasured when it comes to creation.

Like every worthy human being he is vulnerable, he has doubts (who doesn’t ?) but given his determination, his convictions and his maturity, I believe we’re witnessing the birth of a future giant for tomorrow’s cinema.”

## **Yvan Lucas**

*Colourist*

“Hervé Schneid called me up saying : “I’m working on a brilliant first film, you need to meet its makers.” A few days later, judging from a few images, I was stunned, and “bewitched”. I told my colleagues : “It’s a no-budget film, but we need to do it, I need to do it !” In L.A I usually work on big studio fare, so this one was like a breath of fresh air, a lifebelt. Then I met Everardo and Luis, his DOP, who is also a coproducer on the film. From the very first dinner, our first night out, it was obvious that we would connect, that it wouldn’t be “just another movie.”

Everardo is larger than life. He is unafraid. He pushed me to a very colourful universe, with golden and green tones, that no one in Hollywood today would dare to use... He wanted to alternate warm and cold colours, depending on the time-period on screen. He’s bold when it comes to compositions, formats and lights. It’s very compelling. He knew exactly what he was looking for. It never felt like working on a first film.”



## **Michèle et Laurent Pétin**

*Coproducteurs*

“On a hot and sunny June afternoon, we locked ourselves in a cool editing room to see fifteen minutes of a Mexican director’s first film. Rumor had it that it was very promising.

What we discovered that day was not a promise, but an absolute certainty. As well as striking an emotional blow, the movie was a cinematic shock. Laurent and I exchanged a brief nod just before the lights came on again. Yes, of course, we wanted to be a part of this film, of this adventure.

A bright smile lighting up his face, a cascading laugh, an incandescent expression, open, sincere, Everardo resembles his film. Generous, unabated, bold, with an appetite for life. Excessive, also. In “Dias de gracia” he mixes styles, formats, time-periods, camera movements. Ravenous for images and stories, he won over three of the greatest film composers who all dropped their ongoing projects for him, for his film, in order to magnify it and take it higher.

Everardo has two guardian angels : Leopoldo, his brother, and Luis Sansans, his DOP. They are the Mexican coproducers. The four of us, we are Everardo’s Four Musketeers, his inner circle, his faithful soldiers. His first fans.

“Dias de Gracia” has Mexican, French, Japanese and American blood in its veins... New blood !”

## The 3 World Cups

### 2002

*Host countries* : Japan and South Korea

*Dates* : From May 31<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>

*Final* : Brazil – Germany

*Champion* : Brazil (2-0)

#### **A few significant facts :**

- First World Cup held in Asia
- One of the two hosts, South Korea, manages to reach to the semi-finals after defeating both Italy, a three-times winner, and Spain.
- With 8 goals, including 2 during the final against Germany, Ronaldo is the highest goalscorer of the competition.

**France** : The world champions went out of the Cup without even scoring a goal and earned the unwanted record of the worst World Cup performance by a defending champion since 1934 :

- The tournament's opening match held in Seoul started with a shock 1–0 defeat for the defending champions, who played without an injured Zidane, against newcomers Senegal.
- For their second game, France were held to a goalless draw by Uruguay after star striker Thierry Henry was sent off.
- A 2–0 defeat by Denmark in their last group game sealed France's fate.

**Mexico** : Winning against Croatia and Ecuador and held to a draw by Italy, the team managed to top its group, and easily qualified for the second round, but lost 0-2 against its American neighbor.

## 2006

*Host country* : Germany

*Dates* : From June 9<sup>th</sup> to July 9<sup>th</sup>

*Final* : Italy - France

*Winner* : Italy (5-3), in a penalty shootout, after the game had finished in a 1-1 draw.

### **A few significant facts :**

- Modern football entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century with German state-of-the-art stadiums.
- Zidane's infamous headbutt
- An all-European semi-final line up with Germany, Italy, Portugal and France.

**France** : Building up steam, the team won 4 games in a row, including its victories against Spain, Brazil, the defending Champion, and Portugal in semi-finals.

The final : The final started with Zidane's controversial 7<sup>th</sup> minute penalty kick, but Materazzi levelled the scores shortly after. With a 1-1 draw after 90 minutes, the match was forced into extra-time. Zidane's headbutt and ensuing exclusion, produced a lot of tension, but no further goals and a penalty shootout followed.

**Mexico** : After a 3-1 victory against Iran, a 1-3 draw against Angola and a loss against the Portuguese, Mexico finished second in Group D. In the second round, Mexico played against Argentina and scored in the 5<sup>th</sup> minute with a goal by captain Rafael Márquez. Four minutes later, Argentina equalized but the score remained 1-1 and in the second period of extra time, a volley by the Argentinian Maxi Rodríguez brought about a 1-2 loss for Mexico.

## 2010

*Host country* : South Africa

*Dates* : From June 11<sup>th</sup> to July 11<sup>th</sup>

*Final* : Spain - Netherlands

*Winner* : Espagne (1- 0)

### **A few significant facts :**

- First World Cup held in Africa, vibrating with the sound of vuvuzelas.
- France and Mexico happened to be in the same group, along with South Africa, the host country.

**France** : Out of three games in group A, France lost two matches and didn't qualify for the second round. Dissension within the team escalated. Even its most supportive fans were disappointed.

**Mexico** ranked second in group A, notably winning against France 2-0, with a penalty by Cuauhtémoc Blanco, who became the first Mexican player ever to score in three different World Cups.

In the second round, Mexico faced Argentina in a rematch of their Round of 16 loss at the hands of the Argentine team four years earlier. The Mexican team fell behind when a controversial goal was scored by Carlos Tevez in offside position, in which the Argentine team were clearly positioned offside. The referee was urged to discount the goal but it was declared a fair play. For the fifth straight World Cup, the Mexican team were eliminated in the Round of 16 as a result of their 3-1 defeat.

## Cast

Lupe .....	Tenoch Huerta
Iguana / Doroteo .....	Kristian Ferrer
Susana Lozano .....	Dolores Heredia
The kidnapped.....	Carlos Bardem
Max .....	Eilen Yañez
Melquiadez .....	Mario Zaragoza
Commandante Jose.....	José Sefami
Esperanza.....	Sonia Couho
The Madrina.....	Veronica Falcon
The Kaliman.....	Vikram Chatwal

## Crew

Director .....Everardo Gout  
Script and dialogues .....Everardo Gout  
Director of photography ..Luis Sansans  
Editor .....Hervé Schneid  
.....José Salcedo  
Sound designer .....Fernando Camara  
Mixer .....Vincent Arnardi  
Composers .....Nick Cave  
.....Warren Ellis  
.....Atticus Ross  
.....Shigeru Umebayashi  
.....Massive Attack  
Additional Music .....Antony Partos  
Set design .....Bernardo Trujillo  
Costume design .....Bertha Romero  
Make-up .....Felipe Zalazar

A Mexican-French coproduction produced by  
.....Casa B Productions  
.....ARP  
Producers .....Leopoldo Gout  
.....Everardo Gout  
.....Ozcar Ramírez  
.....Michèle & Laurent Pétin  
In association with .....Fidécine México  
.....EFICINE 226  
.....ARTE MECANICA

Sound  
Dolby SRD/DTS



Format  
Scope

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## Notes

