

Mongrel Media

PRESENTS

THE MAID

A film by Sebastian Silva

2009, 94 Minutes, Spanish w/ English Subtitles

Winner: 2009 Sundance Film Festival's World Cinema Jury Prize Dramatic
and World Cinema Special Jury Prize for Acting
Official Selection: 2009 New Directors/New Films



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High res stills may be downloaded from <http://www.mongrelmedia.com/press.html>

FORASTERO and DIRORIRO in association with TIBURÓN FILMES and PUNTOGUIÓN PUNTO present "LA NANA" with CATALINA SAAVEDRA CLAUDIA CELEDÓN MARIANA LOYOLA ALEJANDRO GOIC ANITA REEVES DELFINA GUZMÁN ANDREA GARCÍA-HUIDOBRO MERCEDES VILLANUEVA and AGUSTÍN SILVA edited by DANIELLE FILLIOS art director PABLO GONZÁLEZ director of photography SERGIO ARMSTRONG associate producers EDGAR SAN JUAN ISSA GUERRA and SEBASTIAN SÁNCHEZ A. executive producer GREGORIO GONZÁLEZ written by SEBASTIÁN SILVA and PEDRO PEIRANO produced by GREGORIO GONZÁLEZ directed by SEBASTIÁN SILVA.

The Maid – Credits

Directed by

Sebastián Silva	Director/ Writer
Pedro Peirano	Writer

Producers

Gregorio González ...	executive producer
Issa Guerra ...	co-producer
Edgar San Juan ...	co-producer
Sebastian Sanchez Amunategui ...	co-producer

Cast - in credits order

Catalina Saavedra ...	Raquel
Claudia Celedón ...	Pilar
Alejandro Goic ...	Mundo
Andrea García-Huidobro ...	Camila
Mariana Loyola ...	Lucy
Agustín Silva ...	Lucas
Darok Orellana ...	Tomás
Sebastián La Rivera ...	Gabriel
Mercedes Villanueva ...	Mercedes
Anita Reeves ...	Sonia
Delfina Guzmán ...	Abuela
Luis Dubó ...	Eric
Luis Muñoz ...	Raúl
Andreína Olivari ...	Javiera
Gloria Canales ...	Mamá de Lucy
Luis Wigdorsky ...	Papá de Lucy
Juan Pablo Larenas ...	Rodrigo

Cinematographer

Sergio Armstrong	Cinematographer
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Crew

Danielle Fillios	Editor
Cristina Aburto	Casting Director
Pablo González	Art Director
Sonia Caamaño ...	hair stylist
Macarena Matte ...	makeup artist
Viviana Verges ...	makeup artist
Mario Ricci ...	ass. Production manager
Jorge Soto ...	production manager
María José Droguett ...	first ass. director
Francesca Francini ...	second ass. director
Gabriela Sobarzo ...	ass. director: continuity
Rodrigo Lepe ...	art department ass.
Colomba Rodrigo ...	property master
Colomba Rodrigo ...	set dresser
Valentina Silva ...	art department ass.
Raúl Sotomayor ...	sound recordist
Ernesto Trujillo ...	boom operator
Horacio Chacon ...	best boy
Eduardo Contreras ...	lighting technician
Gabriel Díaz ...	gaffer
Pablo Toro ...	still photographer
Carolina Norero ...	costume assistant
Francisca Román ...	costume supervisor
Ruy García ...	music supervisor
Roberto Araya ...	production driver
Oscar Castro ...	runner
Juan Radrigán ...	script consultant
Eugenio Ramírez ...	production assistant
Brandon Paine ...	special thanks

Production Companies

Forastero

Santiago, Chile:
Antonio Bellet 305 D.1101
Providencia
Santiago7500025
Chile

Tiburón Filmes (in association with)

Punto Guion Punto Producciones (in association with)

SYNOPSIS

After 23 years working as housemaid in an upper class Santiago, Chile household, Raquel (Catalina Saavedra) is as much a part of the Valdez family as the wife, husband, and kids she lives with and looks after. On the occasion of Raquel's 41st birthday Pilar Valdez (Claudia Celedon), her husband Mundo (Alejandro Goic) and their oldest son Lucas (Agustin Silva) force the sullen, withdrawn maid to emerge from her kitchen sanctum and join the family for a brief celebration at the close of dinner. But Raquel's discomfort is as strong as her "family's" need to acknowledge their awkward dependence on her and she soon withdraws to her room.

Plagued by migraines and dizziness, Raquel nevertheless devotes herself to her domestic responsibilities and to a complex series of relationships with the individual family members she serves. For insecure Pilar the maid has become the de facto head of the household. For teenage Lucas Raquel has transformed from surrogate mother to crush-object. For daughter Camila, (Andrea Garcia-Huidobro) Raquel is a bitterly resented opponent in an ongoing and undeclared psyche war fought via noisy early morning vacuuming, ignored instructions, and constant complaints and accusations.

Over Raquel's objections Pilar hires a second domestic to ease the workload and hopefully improve her beloved maid's grim attitude and increasingly poor health. Young and pretty Peruvian au pair Mercedes (Mercedes Villanueva) is an instant success with the rest of the family, particularly Raquel's nemesis Camila. But behind the scenes Raquel quietly and mercilessly torments her new co-worker and eventually her campaign of comically petty and unrelenting psychological abuse succeeds in driving Mercedes away. At her patrician mother's suggestion, Pilar borrows longtime housemaid Sonia (Anita Reeves) who resists Raquel's provocations more forcefully. Tensions between Sonia and Raquel escalate to the breaking point and when the two veteran maids come to blows and Mundo's prized ship model is destroyed as they brawl, Sonia is dismissed.

Raquel's victory is brief. She collapses while serving breakfast and grudgingly accepts a period of bed rest and convalescence. When Raquel returns to work she discovers that Lucy (Mariana Loyola), a cheerful new maid near her own age, has effectively taken Raquel's place. Raquel's household terror tactics prove no match for Lucy's humor and resilience and as their trust and affection grows, lonely and jealous Raquel begins to transform. Lucy invites Raquel to spend Christmas with her rural farm family and for the first time in her life Raquel feels what it's like to be truly treated as an equal. She even kindles romance with Lucy's cousin.

Lucy's deep emotional need to be with her own family keeps her from forming the same tangled relationships with the members of the Valdez household, she becomes increasingly disenchanted with domestic service and city living. As Raquel, grateful and more cheerful, sets out to organize a surprise birthday party for her new friend, Lucy announces that she has decided to go back to the farm. Will Raquel be able to sustain her dawning appreciation for life beyond the kitchen and continue to develop a positive new outlook?

ABOUT DIRECTOR SEBASTIAN SILVA

Born in Santiago Chile in 1979, Sebastián Silva is a multifaceted artist whose body of work includes painting, illustration and popular music. After graduating from Catholic school in Santiago, Silva studied filmmaking at the Escuela de Cine de Chile for a year before leaving to study animation in Montreal. While eking out a living selling shoes, Silva mounted the first gallery exhibition of his illustrations and started his band CHC who have since gone on to record three albums. Silva's second illustration show brought him in contact with Hollywood but a frustrating period in Los Angeles spent pitching to Steven Spielberg and others netted no tangible results. Fleeing Hollywood, Silva initiated two more musical projects, "Yaia" and "Los Mono", both picked up for distribution by Sonic360 and released in the US and the UK, and exhibited his art work in New York while writing the script for what would become his first feature *La Vida me Mata*. Back in Chile, Silva recorded a solo album and directed *La Vida me Mata*. Released in 2007, *La Vida me Mata* was a critical success, garnering multiple awards including Best Film from the Chilean Critics Circle. Setting aside a script based on his disastrous trip to Hollywood, Silva wrote and directed *La Nana* in February of 2008.

CATALINA SAAVEDRA FILMOGRAPHY

FILM

"Hasta en las mejores familias" Directed by Gustavo Letelier
"Normal Con Alas" Directed by Coca Gómez
"Neruda Fugitivo" Directed by Manuel Basoalto
"Secretos" Directed by Valeria Sarmiento
"Chile Puede" Directed by Ricardo Larrain
"La Vida me Mata" Directed by Sebastián Silva
"Mami te Amo" Directed by Elisa Eliash
"La Nana" Directed by Sebastián Silva

THEATRE

1991-1997. Obra "El Despertar" Directed by Alicia Correa
1992: Café-Concert "TV cable 90" Colectivo. The Pateticos
1993: Obra "Pervertimento y otros gestos para nada" Directed by Ingrid Leyton
1994: Obra "La Noche de la Iguana" Directed by Ingrid Leyton
1995: Obra "Muerte de un Funcionario Público" Directed by Alicia Correa
1996,98: Obra "Telarañas" Directed by Alicia Correa
2000: Obra "Sht" Directed by Alicia Correa
2001-2002: "Los Ojos Rotos" Directed by María Izquierdo
2001-2002: Asist. Dir. callejero "Firmas para el Amor" Directed by María Izquierdo
2003 "Circulando" Directed by María Izquierdo
2004 "Ni Ahí" Directed by Cristian Keim
2004 "Inocencia" Directed by Luis Ureta
2004 "En La Sangre" Directed by Carlos Osorio
2005-06 "Putas Errantes" Directed by Luis Ureta
2006 Asist. Dirección "El lugar de la misericordia" Directed by Carlos Osorio
2007 "Las Gallinas" Directed by Pedro Vicuña
2007 "Las Brutas" Directed by Rodrigo Perez
2008 "Los Mountainbikers" Directed by Luis Ureta

INTERVIEW WITH WRITER-DIRECTOR SEBASTIAN SILVA

She's More Or Less Family

The Maid is a very emotional film for me. I can narrow it to one sentence – “She’s more or less family.” It’s that ambiguity. It has to do with struggling with not being able to love or be loved. Neither the maid nor the people in the household know where they stand in terms of emotional connection or affection. I was really young when I first had an experience with someone coming into the family like that. I would go against any kind of authority in my house. Our family’s maid was like a second mother, but I didn’t want a second mother. The maid has the right to boss you around. She’s in charge of you and yet at the same time she is not your mother. So you’re tempted to be a rebel because you think you can fight against her without any serious consequences, because she’s “just the maid” and not really your mother. But she’s not “just the maid”. She’s someone that’s living at your house 24-7 and she really is in charge of you. The closest character to me in the film isn’t Lukas, it’s Camilla which is a little embarrassing. In the film Camilla goes against Raquel because there is a jealousy between the two of them. I didn’t have that jealousy with the real maid but I did have the rebel thing.

I have a big family and a lot of siblings. Most of my siblings didn’t have the same authority issue with the maid and just felt that she was working there. They were nice to her, she was nice to them, and there was no social conflict or anything. They lived a little more oblivious to that social phenomenon that was taking place. I was against having a live-in maid like Raquel and I think that made me conscious and curious enough to wonder about what this person was doing in my house. Since I was against having a maid, I had to think more about it. Raquel in the film is sort of like a lost soul in economic need that comes to this bourgeois family in this third world country at a very young age. That’s what they say at the beginning of the film – “Raquel, you’ve been here for over 20 years now. You came here one year before Camilla.” She got there when she was so young and is from such a totally different background that she has been slowly crushed and absorbed by this upper middle class family’s values and ethics. For 20 years she’s been operating from a 16 or 17 year old’s emotional intelligence and just been going slowly crazy. She doesn’t have a social life at

all. I used to wonder if the maid in our house was as mean to me as she was just because she hasn't had sex in twenty years!

Before Lucy comes Raquel's strongest relationship is with the mother of the house. It's a professional sort of thing but here's an emotional, profound bond between them. It's co-dependency – it's just not out there in the open because they're from different social backgrounds. I think that's how people are with their jobs sometimes. It's rare when a boss in this type of situation, meaning the mother, would sit down with the maid and have like a very deep conversation over a glass of wine together.

In the US people will hire a nanny that will come for the day or whatever, but here an au pair or a nanny will often share a similar cultural or social background with the family they work for. She probably has studied something or she wants to study something, she has friends and she's got a life. And either way a cleaning lady or a nanny who comes for a day or three times a week is just doing a job, you know? What I'm portraying is the maid that lives with the family and works with them 24-7. In Chile it's more of an anthropological problem. They're like nuns - the uniform, the work, the little room, hopefully a TV, and that's it. That kind of life can really ruin your emotional intelligence.

I grew up among these kinds of maids and I've made art pieces and shorts films that touched on the subject before this. The maid issue has been stuck in my head forever. I made a photo album about a maid that stayed with my family one summer. I was like 15 years old and she was there doing the housekeeping and I had to work and so I took a lot of pictures of her and made a photo album of her. Later, I made a short film called El Mal de Canary that had a maid in the film who would always wear a gorilla mask and every time she would go out of the house rain would start pouring just on her. The maid in it was really disturbed, and it was kind of like she was cursed. With this film I wanted to exorcise that theme in a more solid, serious, mature way.

Writing/casting/writing

The writing process was actually amazingly easy to me. Most of the things I described in the screenplay were scenes or situations that I really experienced growing up. Everything felt real to me so I had a treatment very quickly. I also felt like I had the characters. Both Catalina who of course plays Raquel and Claudia who plays Pilar worked on my first film *La Vida Me Mata* and I developed the script with them in mind. Claudia is my old, old friend, hates TV and has never done anything she knew she wouldn't be proud of. Catalina has done a lot of theater but she's also been on Chilean TV soap operas, and sitcoms playing small roles for years. She's a very serious actress but she's not afraid of losing her dignity. She doesn't give a shit. She's got a son and she needs to feed him so she'll just do whatever she has to. When I first thought about writing "The Maid" and pursuing the project I thought of her as the main character right away. But when I called her and I offered her the job, initially she said, "fuck you, man. I've done too many maids!" She actually has portrayed like 17 different maids in sitcoms and soap operas. The maids on TV in Chile are always these girls showing their boobs and are just sort of silly characters. I told her, "I'm sorry, you're just the perfect one for this role. I promise you this is going to be a different kind of maid."

I co wrote the screenplay with my ex-boyfriend Pedro Peirano, who is a very well-known writer in Chile, and has done some very good cult TV shows. Catalina was pretty excited about that, so she agreed to read the script when we were done. Finally she said, "I love the screenplay, I like Pedro, I like you, I loved *La Vida Me Mata*," and she was in it.

Pedro and I argued a lot about the scene when the mother sees the scratched pictures. It's really in your face and scary and a little risky to do that because it's kind of like you may enter into another genre. It's something that's more in the direction of a suspense or thriller kind of story. American audiences and people who haven't really dealt with a live-in maid or someone living and working

in their house full time tend to assume that the film is going to go somewhere else during that scene. But we never thought that there was that thriller tension with her. I never expected that audiences would think that the maid might kill someone when we were writing that scene and none of us thought of that while shooting the film. Since Raquel is sort of based on real people, I knew that character would never get really violent with anybody.

The humor in *The Maid* is not based on jokes. For me comedies are really hard to watch when they're defined as comedies because you know they're going to try to make you laugh. I prefer it when the humor in a script or film makes you nervous and tense and laughter is just one possible reaction. There are just these human, uncomfortable situations in life. It's like the scene of Sonya going up to the roof. It's a little off but she's so tough and it's totally possible. It's kind of outrageous and it's kind of crazy but I like the tone that that scene gives to the film.

Home Grown

We shot the film in my family house. What you see on screen is where I grew up. Raquel's room was the maid's real room down to the side table and the covers on the bed. All the decoration is the maid's decoration. The kitchen, the parents' room –everything that you see in the film was the way it was when I lived there. It felt so good to shoot it there. Since it was my family house, we could spend as much time as we wanted beforehand to do some sketching and storyboarding and camera blocking so we could run a lot of long takes. That really helped out. It made us go so much faster in production and we were able to shoot the film very cheaply in just 16 days.

It was always an organic kind of process. That's my family house. The actor that plays Lukas is my real brother. So the whole film was really a portrait of my family. It's a very intimate portrait of a part of my life. It was still a very stressful shoot. I mean it was fun just because we were making a

film but sometimes I would go inside the bathroom and just like freak out about things and then go back to the set and smile and pretend that I was having a good time.

We used exactly the same camera as on my previous film a Panasonic P2 HD. It's not really a high res camera, like the Red, which looks too crisp and sharp when you blow it up to 35mm film.

Music

I've been involved in different music projects and have made a few albums - six albums actually. I'm good at melody, at pop-y sorts of melodies, and I'm good with lyrics I think, but I don't really play an instrument. It's just like I know like seven guitar chords and that's it. When the kids are playing ping pong in the film and you hear a song in the background? That's one of my band's songs. Actually it's a remix that someone else made of our song. La Vida Me Mata, the first film I made, had a traditional score that was kind of like Danny Elfman meets John Brion meets... me. But it was more of a fiction film – a dark comedy/film noir in black and white with special effects – kind of like a fable. I didn't really think about the music while writing the script or while shooting *The Maid*. When I watched the first cut I initially thought I would have not a traditional soundtrack but more like really creepy, scary piano, almost silly sitcom type tunes in specific places like when Raquel tries on the sweater in the walk in closet and looks at herself in the mirror. But that wasn't good. It's not really a silent, somber film. It's not that serious feeling. It's also not that quiet. The film has so many organic noises. Raquel's always working, the kids are always messing around somewhere – you always hear stuff. The nakedness, the nudity of the sound, was really appealing to me. I had so much organic sound that I decided to just not use scored music and it was the best way to do it. It felt good and it gave the film more of a real sense to it which is what I was looking for while shooting it and while writing it. I just tried to be as real as possible.

Raquel and Lucy

The obsession Raquel has with Lucy could maybe fall into a sort of a sexual thing but I think it's more that Raquel's in love with Lucy and worships Lucy. She needs her. It's more emotional than erotic. It's like she's her first friend. Lucy's the only person that has embraced her and cried with her in her life. Raquel begins depending on Lucy. She needs her and wants to be with her. You can see in the way that she prepares the breakfast for her. She looks so devoted to her and she wants to make her happy in such a childish way. I think that's the tension between them. I don't really think Raquel would ever kiss her on the lips or touch her... But yes, she might spy on her. Maybe if Lucy is talking on the phone Raquel would be listening. It's that kind of obsession.

If I were to see the film for the first time and I don't know anything about it, I would say Raquel was a virgin. So and then she has the chance to have sex with this man and she refuses it. And I think it's not because she's a lesbian, I think it's because she's just afraid of sex and afraid of masculinity and afraid of that world because she is so inexperienced. She's not ready to begin.

The fight scene with Sonya, also reveals something that Raquel had never been exposed to - physical violence. Locking the doors, the cat, the vacuum - she's always been passive aggressive and never really physical until she fights with Sonya. And when Raquel locks Lucy out and then discovers her sunbathing topless, it's a total provocation.

Lucy knows that she's going to shock her. She wins her over by shocking her and confronting her.

The End

The ending has a weird feeling for me. I've felt it with the maids at my house growing up. They would get a day off and I would see them putting on their make up and doing their hair and going out in a fancy outfit and it would just feel so sad to me. But that sad feeling is so patronizing. I

hated it, but I could not avoid feeling it. When Raquel runs in the end, it makes me really sad to see her happy just because she's jogging. It's such a small joy and it's so patronizing to feel sorry for her like that and I hate that. That feeling has a lot to do with the film and why I made it. I think perhaps I'm overcoming that feeling and trying not to judge what amount of happiness is right or enough for another person. I always get goose bumps in that scene no matter how many times I watch it. A lot of people have said that it's a happy ending, that the movie has this beautiful sort of conclusion and I'm always tempted to say, "No, not really. She's still working for the family, Lucy is gone, I mean she's just jogging, for Christ's sake!" We watched her become so inspired by Lucy's family Christmas that when Raquel's mother calls she feels so sorry that she hadn't had that with her own family. We watched Lucy leave so Raquel is alone again. She was afraid of sex so no sex for her either. There is a little redemption for Raquel but it's very little. It's a small transformation because real redemption is something that comes very slowly.

My friend Gabriel was the gaffer on the film and an awesome DP. He's really smart and I really trust him. I remember him telling me "the end when she's ironing stuff and she goes to her room and she lies in bed and she turns on the TV and she's really sad? Cut it there." We looked at it that way and it felt so empty. You want to go for what you really feel inside your heart sometimes, even though it could be seen as clichéd or cheesy. Human beings are cheesy. I didn't want to just make another one of those films about a suffering South American woman. I want the goose bumps from time to time, you know?

PRESS

“Silva gives the live-in at this excellent film’s center a complexity normally reserved for the masters.” -- Howard Feinstein, Indiewire

“A tense, engrossing character study with a sometimes boldly repellent performance by Catalina Saavedra in the title role” – Justin Chang, Variety

“Three films from different countries with varying connections to social realism are more or less carried by their female lead performances. By far the best is Sebastian Silva’s movie *The Maid*.” – Stephen Holden, The New York Times “At the 2009 New Directors/New Films Series, Realism Rules”

“Although small, La Nana is an intelligent microcosm of Latin social hierarchy while also focusing on one woman's journey to free herself from a mental servitude of her own making.” – Mike Goodridge, Screen Daily

“...at its core, this film masterfully captures the mechanics of a upper-class family told through the eyes of a woman who longs to belong yet would never relinquish her position as subordinate. La Nana sets the bar high for 2009.” – Alexis Madden, Moving Pictures