LA CORRIENTE DEL GOLFO, CARCAVA CINE AND REDRUM

present

HOMBRE AL AGUA

A FILM BY **GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL**



MEXICO – 116' – 1.33

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SYNOPSIS

Camilo, a Cuban lifeguard, saves a Mexican businessman named Abel from drowning in the Caribbean Sea. Grateful, Abel "rescues" Camilo, by offering to take him to Mexico and become his right-hand man. Abel introduces Camilo to his daughter, Juana, whom he marries and with whom he eventually has a daughter. But soon, Camilo discovers that everything was part of a Machiavellian plan of manipulation and control. With his new life collapsing, he must uncover who is behind the plot and take control of his own destiny. Will Camilo find a way out, or will he remain trapped in the power game?

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I started writing this film eight or nine years ago. I began to realize how, at a certain age, fatherhood changes your relationship with time, with your partner, and also with your friends. Suddenly, between work and family, every moment of your day is spoken for, and almost without noticing it, a certain kind of loneliness begins to set in. I wondered what the most extreme version of that feeling might look like, and who might inhabit it. That is how Camilo appeared: a Cuban living far from an island he feels is falling apart, just as his own family life is beginning to unravel.

Hombre al agua could simply be a comedy about a separation. But that separation opened the door to many other things I was interested in exploring, such as masculinity, class, immigration, politics, friendship, or belonging. I didn't want to make a film that set out to prove a point, but I did want it to give me room to ask questions about the world we're living in. I also didn't want it to follow the conventions of any one genre or formula too closely. I wanted the film to find its own rules, to misdirect the audience, to head in one direction and then suddenly veer off somewhere else. I always imagined it as something closer to the flow of music than to the narrative logic of literature.

Camilo eventually became a kind of heteronym for me. He goes through things that have happened to me, things I've imagined, things I'm afraid of, and others I might even have wished to experience. The story is very far removed from my own life, and yet when I watch the finished film, I feel quite exposed, almost naked. That's one of the things I love most about cinema: the possibility of living many lives within a single one. I hope other people can see something of themselves in it.

Gael García Bernal

INTERVIEW WITH GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL

Where did *Hombre al Agua* come from? What made you want to turn this idea into your third feature as a director?

It came out of becoming a father. I began to realize how quickly fatherhood changes your relationship with your partner, with time, and with your friends, especially your friendships with other men. Suddenly, work and family take up all your time, and that space that used to belong to friendship is no longer there. It may sound obvious, but I became interested in what the most extreme version of that loneliness, that quiet kind of isolation, might look like.

That's where Camilo came from, and from there all the other themes began to emerge. I never thought of them as a checklist of things the film had to address, but as inseparable parts of the character's life: masculinity, class, migration, politics, the need to belong somewhere. I tend to approach the films I make as a kind of philosophical exercise. I want them to lead me toward questions I don't know how to answer.

The title describes Camilo's emotional state. Is *Hombre al Agua* ("man overboard") the story of a man adrift?

Yes, although I'd say Camilo isn't simply lost, he's trying to survive. He's experiencing a feeling that is very specific to Cuba: the sense that the place you come from is disappearing. Not because it is being conquered or visibly destroyed, but because it is slowly coming apart, emptying out as people leave. In the film, he receives devastating news: his mother has died, the last person he had left in Cuba. From that moment on, it feels as though there is no longer a reason to stay, but perhaps no reason to go back either. I was interested in what that feeling looks like: what happens when the place you come from ceases to exist for you.

And alongside that geographical sense of being adrift, there is an emotional one. His relationship is coming to an end, and he is trying to hold on to whatever he can. Camilo wants to experience a different life, and that possibility opens up to him, but he soon realizes that it can become a trap as well.

The film portrays a man in crisis around the age of forty, but by extension it also explores the crisis of masculinity. What did you want to examine?

I wanted Camilo to be surrounded by women in the house and to find himself playing a different role with each of them. With one, he must be a protector and a confidant. To another, he is the awkward husband. With someone else, he has to help, but he also has to know when to step back. He never quite understands what his place is. I think that's a confusion a lot of men are experiencing right now. We are finally questioning masculinity in a profound way, thanks in large part to feminism, which is much further ahead in that process of deconstruction.

The old roles no longer work, but the new ones haven't been fully defined yet. What does it mean to be a father and protect someone without falling back into the traditional masculine role of the protector? Maybe it is no longer about making decisions for other people, but about being there, listening, and finding different ways of caring for them. Camilo tries to occupy all of those

roles, but he never feels entirely comfortable in any of them, and he isn't particularly good at them either.

It is also the story of a separation, even though the house, work, and everyday life seem to carry on much as before. I was interested in the shapelessness of many breakups. There isn't always a great betrayal or one defining scene that explains why two people stop being together. Sometimes nothing dramatic happens. It just ends.

What autobiographical or generational aspects did you put into Camilo?

There's a lot of that. The film is a fable that is quite far removed from my own life, and yet I feel very exposed in it, almost naked. Camilo is a kind of heteronym for me: he goes through things that have happened to me, things I have imagined might happen to me, and things I probably fear. Cinema gives you a freedom that poets have always understood very well: the possibility of living many lives within a single one.

There is a lot of me in Camilo's crisis, but there is also a lot of what I would like to be, especially in his sense of humor and in the freedom with which he moves through the film. That freedom to explore, make mistakes, and change direction is something I'd like to find not only in the films I direct, but also in the ones I take part in as an actor.

Why was it important for Camilo to be Cuban? What does his status as an outsider bring to the film?

Cuba has always felt very close to me. It was hugely important to me as a child, as a teenager, and later in life as well. It is also a country that speaks to Latin Americans in a very particular way. It shares a history and a reality with the rest of the continent, but it took a completely different path, with some extraordinary achievements and some deeply painful consequences.

At first, I thought about casting a Cuban actor. But every time I told potential financiers that I didn't want to play the role myself, they stopped listening. Eventually, I realized that if I wanted to get the film made, I would have to play Camilo. But it wasn't only a practical decision. I've always been interested in working with different accents. For an actor, an accent can be an extraordinary mask: the moment you put it on, you breathe differently, and you begin to build the character from a different place. In the Spanish-speaking world, there is still a slightly old-fashioned idea that only someone born in a particular place can play someone from there. I think the truth that can emerge from behind a mask can be much more powerful.

The film brings together characters and actors from Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay and Puerto Rico, with different accents and backgrounds from across the continent. Were you trying to create a Latin American landscape?

I wanted to make a Latin American film, but not in the sense of putting a label on it that says, "This is Latin America." I wanted that identity to emerge from the mix: from the accents, the different backgrounds, the contradictions. Brazil has been a kind of refuge for me. Because of the language, I can experience it almost as a foreigner arriving in Latin America and falling in love with the continent all over again. It feels very close and very far away at the same time, and for a long time I had wanted to bring Portuguese into one of my films.

I was also interested in the relationship between Cuba and Argentina, two places that are marked, in different ways, by a sense of being at one extreme, of having to leave in order to get somewhere else. All of that eventually comes together in Mexico, and more specifically in Yucatán, with a geography and a soundscape that haven't been seen very often in cinema. I don't think there is such a thing as a single Latin American identity. What exists is a mix of histories, migrations and languages that overlap and influence one another. The film inhabits that space without trying to smooth out those differences or turn them into something exotic.

Abel introduces Camilo to a privileged world through a generous gesture that ultimately becomes a form of control. What did you want to explore about class and economic power?

The starting point came from a story I had heard among lifeguards. A man rescued a young man from drowning, and the young man's father, out of gratitude, offered him a job. The lifeguard's life changed completely. I was fascinated by that idea: a rescue that opens a door and transforms someone's entire life. But it also raises an uncomfortable question: what happens when gratitude turns into a form of possession?

I remember that during a shoot in the Dominican Republic, someone on the crew wanted to adopt a stray dog from the beach and take it back to a cold city in the United States. Someone asked, "Has anyone asked the dog if it actually wants to go?" It's a simple question, but in a way, it contains the whole film. Why do we assume that our idea of a better life is necessarily the life someone else wants?

Your two previous films as a director also dealt with class. *Déficit* explored the privilege of a group of young Mexicans, while *Chicuarotes* followed two characters trying to escape poverty. How does *Hombre al agua* continue those concerns, and what new stage does it represent in your filmmaking?

Class will probably keep appearing in the films I make because it is something I care about deeply, and it is closely tied to the world I grew up in. My political awakening coincided with the rise of the Zapatista movement and with becoming aware of the inequalities that run through Mexican society and simply cannot be ignored.

Hombre al agua is perhaps a more immediate film than the previous two, closer to a snapshot of the present. Abel wants to become governor, and that ambition reveals what he has always been: someone who turns every interaction into an opportunity. I think that logic has also seeped into friendship and private life today. I'm interested, too, in the people who fall outside the system: those who don't fit the accepted mold and can't be turned into a marketable image.

Much of the action takes place in a house that gradually goes from being a place of refuge to a gilded cage. How did you conceive that space?

The house had to be beautiful and welcoming, but it also needed to have a very clear vertical hierarchy. I wanted Silvina, this kind of refugee princess Camilo has to look after, to live in a tower, and I wanted there to be an underground space connected to whatever the family is trying to hide. When we got to Yucatán, we discovered that basements are practically nonexistent because the limestone ground is so porous that they would flood almost immediately. So we had to come up with a cinematic solution.

We shot mainly at Hacienda Tamchén, near Mérida, where there was an old chapel and a mezzanine that allowed us to create the tower. Underneath, there was a small swimming pool that we were able to cover and turn into an underground space. We completed the rest using two other haciendas which, through the magic of cinema, appear to be part of the same place. I don't think the audience should ever lose their sense of where they are. They need to know what is above them, what is hidden below, and where each character might be able to escape. In that sense, the architecture became an essential part of the staging and of the film's power dynamics.

The film moves between comedy, drama, suspense, dreamlike moments, and films within the film. How did you find a tone that could hold all of those things together?

We live in a world where a lot of viewers—maybe half—want to know in advance what kind of film they are watching: a comedy, a drama, a thriller. I'm in the other half. I like going into a film without knowing exactly where it is going to take me. From the beginning, I thought of *Hombre al agua* as a comedy in the classical sense, but comedy is an incredibly open form. It can contain sadness, violence, suspense, and moments of strangeness.

The film gradually taught us what its own rules were. Whenever we tried to resolve a scene in a way that felt too conventional or too neatly staged, the whole thing would fall flat. We needed to experiment, to misdirect the audience, to make it seem as though the film were becoming a love story, a melodrama, or a crime film, and then suddenly take it somewhere else. In a way, the characters themselves seem trapped inside a film that keeps changing genre.

Do you think filmmakers who are also actors tend to direct in a particular way?

Possibly. Acting teaches you to try something, throw it away, and try again. You can't become too attached to a decision just because it took you a long time to get there. Maybe that's why, as a director, I don't find it especially painful to cut a scene or let go of an idea once I realize it isn't working. I've also learned that a film is something you discover as you make it. I'm much more interested in a collaborator who helps me find my own answer than in someone who simply tells me what the answer should be.

There is definitely a Buñuel influence in *Hombre al agua*, although I'm slightly embarrassed to say that because it sounds terribly pretentious. For years I was very close to Jean-Claude Carrière, Buñuel's great screenwriting collaborator, and our conversations, his curiosity, and the films he wrote with Buñuel were a major inspiration. I wanted to give myself permission to follow digressions, impulses, and unexpected turns, the kinds of things that are accepted very naturally in theatre, music, or poetry, but that more conventional filmmaking tends to resist. I wanted the film to move more like music does, through rhythm and instinct, rather than according to the narrative logic of literature.

You co-wrote the screenplay with Argentine playwright Mariano Pensotti. How did that collaboration come about, and what did his theatrical background bring to the characters and dialogue?

I already had a lot of the film in my head —the characters, the world, and some sense of where the story could go— but I needed someone who could help me give all of those ideas a structure and make them work on the page. I couldn't quite find a way to bring them together. I approached Mariano because I admire his work as both a playwright and a director. We connected very quickly. We were interested in the same things, so we could move forward without having to explain or justify every instinct. There were actually very few changes between the first screenplay and the version we eventually shot.

One of the things Mariano brought to the film was the idea of films within the film. I loved, for instance, the idea that a strike could be defused by inviting the strikers to make a film about what was happening to them. His theatrical background also helped me think of scenes as spaces for exploration: something you could move around, approach from a different angle, and keep working on until an idea that initially seemed too strange or too remote suddenly made sense.

What kind of approach did you develop with cinematographer Fabrizio La Palombara and editor Yibrán Asuad?

I've known Yibrán since I was a teenager, and we had worked together before on different projects when I was acting, including *Museo*. I had wanted to work with him as a director for a long time. From the moment he read the script, he understood how to take all the different pieces and possibilities in the film and turn them into something concrete. The editing process was very open and exploratory. What I value most about Yibrán is that he never tries to impose an answer on me. He asks the right questions so that I can figure out for myself what film I'm trying to make. It was a long and difficult edit because the film had to find a kind of poetic coherence without losing its rhythm or narrative drive.

I met Fabrizio while shooting the Italian science-fiction film *Another End*. He had worked in Cuba, Brazil, and many other places, and I felt he could connect very naturally with the film's Latin American world. We prepared the shoot very carefully because we only had six weeks. One of the key decisions was to shoot in 4:3. It allowed us to get very close to the characters without feeling intrusive.

Diego Luna and Ricky Martin are executive producers on the film, and Ricky also has a small role. How did they become involved?

Diego's involvement is the most natural thing in the world: he's my partner, and we've spent our whole lives sharing projects. Ricky was one of those wonderful accidents. He was the first person I imagined for the role, but it seemed like such a crazy, almost impossible idea that I kept his name to myself for most of the development process. The part only required one day of shooting, so we kept saying, "We'll find someone."

Then, shortly before we started shooting, I managed to get his number and called him. Before I had even really explained the project, he said, "Whatever you want." We had met a few times and had friends in common, but we weren't close. The thing that had seemed the hardest ended up being the easiest. Ricky came in with an enormous generosity, completely embraced the spirit of the film, understood the humor of the character, and became one of the film's strongest supporters. His involvement as an executive producer grew very naturally out of that enthusiasm.

Would you like to continue directing? Do you have other projects as a filmmaker?

Yes, absolutely. I want to keep acting, but I also really want to continue directing films. I hope *Hombre al agua* finds its audience, because making it was a very fortunate exercise in freedom, and I would like there to continue to be room for films like this. The problem is that independent filmmaking is becoming increasingly difficult. It often feels as though the only projects that are considered viable are adaptations of well-known books or films built around formulas that are easy to market.

The further a film moves outside those parameters, the harder it becomes to finance. We've been talking about a "crisis of cinema" for decades, but maybe this is what the current crisis really is: the disappearance of space for films that are free, hard to classify, and not built according to a formula. I'm convinced there is still an audience for those films. That's the audience I make films for.

GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL

He was born in Guadalajara and raised in Mexico City. He later studied acting at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. Throughout his career, he has worked in film, television, and theatre, becoming one of the most internationally recognized Mexican actors.

Gael García Bernal has collaborated with directors such as Alejandro González Iñárritu, Alfonso Cuarón, and Pedro Almodóvar, Pablo Larrain, Walter Salles, M. Night Shyamalan, Michel Gondry, Lav Diaz, among others and has starred in acclaimed films including *“Amores Perros”, “Y tu mamá también”, “Babel”, “Neruda”, “No”, “Bad Education”, "The Motorcycle Diaries”*
On television, he is best known for his role in the series “Mozart in the Jungle”, for which he won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor. He also voiced the character Héctor in the animated film “Coco”.

As a director, Gael García Bernal has directed the feature films “Déficit”, “Chicuarotes”. which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2019. He has also directed documentary shorts, such as the moving "Los Invisibles," made for Amnesty International. “Hombre al agua” is his third feature. In 2005, he co-founded the documentary film festival Ambulante with *Diego Luna*. In 2018, they also founded the production company La Corriente del Golfo, dedicated to creating films, series, theater, and podcasts. The company has since expanded its influence, producing notable projects including the acclaimed documentary series "Pan y Circo" (2020-2021), which features important conversations about contemporary social issues.

He currently serves as a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador in recognition of his contributions to education and the arts.

Gael García Bernal’s FILMOGRAPHY AS A DIRECTOR

2007: *Déficit* (feature)
2008: "The letter" (short film)
2010: *Revolución* - “Lucio” (short film)
2010: “Los Invisibles” (short film)
2016: *Madly* - “Love of my life” (short film)
2016: “La mano invisible” (short film)
2019: *Chicuarotes* (feature)
2026 : *Hombre al agua* (feature)

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Esmeralda Pimentel

is a Mexican actress with a career spanning Mexico, Spain, and the US across film, theater, and television. She starred in the Spanish period drama LA TEMPLANZA for Prime Video and Atresmedia, and led the international series MONTECRISTO. Her work in Spain continued with the feature film UN FUNERAL DE LOCOS, alongside Belén Rueda and Hugo Silva. In the US, she has appeared on ABC's THE GOOD DOCTOR and the Amazon film DRAMA KING opposite Diego Calva. She just wrapped the Spanish film HADA, from renowned Spanish director Tony Morales.

Débora Nascimento

is a Brazilian actress whose career moves between auteur-driven cinema and some of her country's most widely seen television productions. Her work has taken her from Brazil to the United States, Mexico and Italy, across projects in Portuguese, English and Spanish.

Early in her career, appeared in the American production *The Incredible Hulk*. She went on to work with filmmakers including Willy Biondani in *Além do Homem* and Paulo Sacramento in *O Olho e a Faca*.

Her performance as Andrea in *Pacificado*, directed by American filmmaker Paxton Winters, marked a defining moment in her film career. She stars in Marcos Jorge's *A Arte do Roubo* and in *Eternamente Sua*, a psychological thriller written and directed by Sérgio Machado.

Alongside her work in cinema, Nascimento is one of the most recognizable actresses on Brazilian television. She rose to national prominence as Tessália in *Avenida Brasil*, one of Brazil's most internationally successful telenovelas, and later played a leading role in Walcyr Carrasco's *Êta Mundo Bom!*. More recently, she starred in the Netflix series *Lady Voyeur* and the crime drama *Cenas de um Crime*. She will next return to TV Globo as one of the leads in the network's upcoming early-evening telenovela.

THE DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Fabrizio La Palombara
is an Italian cinematographer with three decades of experience. After graduating in Cinema at the University of Bologna, he began his career working across short films, music videos, commercials, and extensively in documentaries, before focusing primarily on narrative feature films over the last 15 years.
His credits include early international projects such as *H2O* (dir. Leo Perez, 2003, Cuba) and *Private* (dir. Saverio Costanzo, 2005), as well as *L'agnello* (dir. Mario Piredda, 2019). He served as Director of Photography on Piero Messina's near-future drama *Another End* (2024), presented in Competition at the Berlin International Film Festival.
His recent works have earned several accolades, including Best Cinematography at the 2026 Manchester Film Festival for Stefano Lorenzi's Afrodite and the Cheval Noir Award for Best Cinematography at the 2026 Fantasia International Film Festival for Andrea Corsini's Ferine. In 2026, two of his feature projects were selected for the Venice Film Festival: Marco Bechis's *Ritorno a Buenos Aires* (In Competition) and Gael García Bernal's *Hombre al agua* (Venezia Spotlight).

ABOUT THE PRODUCERS

Fernanda de la Peza

is a Mexican film producer and editor, a member of the Mexican Academy of Cinematographic Arts and Sciences, and the founder of Cárcava Cine, an independent production company based in Mexico City.

Since 2005, she has worked on acclaimed feature films such as Silent Light by Carlos Reygadas (Jury Prize, Cannes Film Festival 2007), Post Tenebras Lux, also by Reygadas (Best Director, Cannes Film Festival 2012), and Heli by Amat Escalante (Best Director, Cannes Film Festival 2013). In 2016, she produced and edited Escalante's The Untamed, which received the Silver Lion for Best Director at the Venice International Film Festival, and later produced Lost in the Night, which premiered in Cannes Première in 2023.

In 2018, she founded Cárcava Cine, where she has consolidated a production line centered on auteur cinema, international co-productions, and long-term creative collaborations.

Her producing credits also include Robe of Gems, Natalia López Gallardo's debut feature, winner of the Silver Bear Jury Prize at the 2022 Berlinale; The Hole in the Fence by Joaquín del Paso, which premiered in the Orizzonti section of the Venice Film Festival in 2021; and The Garden We Dreamed, her latest collaboration with Del Paso, which premiered in the Panorama section of the Berlinale in 2026.

More recently, she produced Federico Luis's short film For the Opponents, winner of the Palme d'Or for Best Short Film at the 2026 Cannes Film Festival, and Axel Bertha's debut feature Against Nature, which premiered at the 60th Karlovy Vary International Film Festival.

She is currently in post-production on Margarethe Doesn't Want to Be Seen Dancing, Gabriel Herrera's debut feature. Her recent productions also include Hombre al Agua, directed by Gael García Bernal, which will premiere at the Venice International Film Festival and is part of the Official Selection of the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). She is also producing Michel Lipkes's Ashes of the Fire (El soldado incendiado).

Through Cárcava Cine, De la Peza continues to develop projects driven by distinctive artistic visions and an understanding of filmmaking as a deeply collaborative process, championing films that seek to broaden the ways in which we see and understand the world.

CREDITS

CAST

Gael García Bernal (*Camillo)*
Esmeralda Pimentel *(Juana)*
Débora Nascimento *(Fabiana)*
Natalia Oreiro *(Silvina)*
Anna Díaz *(Malvina)*
Manuel García Rulfo *(Ricardes)*
Jorge Salinas *(Abel)*
Ricky Martin *(Robbie)*

CREW

Director: Gael García Bernal
Script: Gael García Bernal & Mariano Pensotti
Director of Photography: Fabrizio La Palombara
Producers: Gael García Bernal, Fernanda de la Peza, Stacy Perskie
Production company: La Corriente del Golfo, Cárcava Cine, Redrum, D-Vision
Editor: Yibrán Asuad
Production designer: Sandra Cabriada
Sound: Anuar Yahya
Sound design: Javier Umpierrez
Music: Memo Guerra
Costume designer: Mariestela Fernández
Make-up: Itzel Peña
VFX: Stellium VFX