



Presents

# Living is easy with eyes closed

(Vivir es facil con los ojos cerrados)

Written and Directed by  
David Trueba

Winner: 6 Goya Awards, including Best Film, Best Director, Best  
Screenplay and Best Actor

Release Date: 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2014 – Coral Gables Art Theatre, Miami, Florida (exclusive run)  
National roll-out to follow

Running Time: 108 minutes, 1:1.85 5.1 Sound  
Rating: Not Rated

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# LIVING IS EASY WITH EYES CLOSED

## CAST

<i>Juanjo</i>	Armando Espitia
<i>Antonio</i>	Javier Camara
<i>Belen</i>	Natalia de Molina
<i>Bruno</i>	Rogelio Fernandez
<i>Ramon</i>	Ramon Fontsero
<i>Madre de Juanjo</i>	Ariadna Gil
<i>Padre de Juanjo</i>	Jorge Sanz

## FILMMAKERS

<i>Director</i>	David Trueba
<i>Writer</i>	David Trueba
<i>Producer</i>	Cristina Huete
<i>Director of Photography</i>	Daniel Vilar
<i>Production Designer</i>	Pilar Revuelta
<i>Editing</i>	Marta Velasco
<i>Sound</i>	Alvaro Silva Wuth
<i>Music</i>	Pat Metheny and Charlie Haden
<i>Casting</i>	Arantza Velez
<i>Costume Design</i>	Lala Huete
<i>Make-up</i>	Almudena Fonseca & Pepito Juez

<i>Co-produced with</i>	Fernando Trueba p.c. TVE Canal+
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# **PRODUCTION NOTES**

## **SHORT SYNOPSIS**

Spain, 1966: Antonio (Javier Cámara, from "I'm So Excited!") is a teacher and a Beatles fan – facets he combines by getting his pupils to recite the lyrics from "Help" in English class. When he learns that his idol John Lennon is making a film in Almería (Richard Lester's "How I Won the War") he resolves to meet him. On the journey he picks up two young runaways: Bethlehem, a pregnant girl fleeing a convent, and Juanjo, a boy escaping a dictatorial father.

## **LONG SYNOPSIS**

Almeria Spain, 1966: John Lennon is suffering an existential crisis, and has decided he's ready to launch his acting career, and leaves the Beatles. Lennon arrives in Almeria to shoot the war movie "How I won the war" under the direction of Richard Lester. Antonio, an English teacher who teaches in a state school in Albacete, decides to travel to Almeria to meet John Lennon and make him an unusual offer.

En route, Antonio finds Belen and Juanjo. Belen is running away from the turmoil and reclusive life her family and society have forced upon her, leaving a convent in the middle of the night. Antonio and Belen then encounter Juanjo, a 16 year old teenager who has fled his house in the middle of an argument with his father because he won't cut his hair – he looks like a Beatle.

For the three of them, Lennon will be a symbol of freedom and also an aspiration. The three characters will share an adventure that represented the symbol of a country that aspired to a better future in the beauty and provincial Almeria of the 60s, in the same places and days in which Lennon wrote the song "Strawberry Fields Forever".

Based on a true story.

## ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

**DAVID TRUEBA (Director/Writer)** David Trueba was born in Madrid in 1969 and studied journalism at the University Complutense in Madrid. He is a journalist – his weekly articles for *El Periodico de Catalunya* are collected in the anthology entitled *Tragarse la Lengua* and *Articulos de ocasion*, published by Ediciones B. He is currently a TV columnist in *El Pais*.

Trueba also works in Television; he was the co-director of *El Peor Programa de la Semana* [1993-94] and he filmed *Que fue de Jorge Sanz* (2010), a six-episode series for Canal+.

Regarding cinema, Trueba has worked on the scripts of films such as *Amo tu cama rica* (1991), *Los peros anos de nuestra vida* (1994), *Two Much* (1994), *Perdita Durango* (1997), *La nina de tus ojos* (1998), and on the documentary *Balseros* (2003), which was nominated for the Oscar for the Best Documentary of 2004. Films on which he worked as Director and screenwriter include *La Buena Vida* (1996), *Obra Maestra* (2000) *Soldados de Salamina* (2003), *Bienvenido a casa* (2006), *La Silla de Fernando* (2006), *Madrid 1987* (2011) and *Living is easy with eyes closed* (2013).

As an author, Trueba has written three novels, all published by Anagrama: *Abierto toda la noche* (1995), *Cuatro Amigos* (1999) and *Saber Perder* (2008), which was awarded the National Critics Prize in 2008 and was shortlisted for the Medicis Prize in its French version. His novels have been translated into ten languages.

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## DIRECTORS NOTES

The backdrop for *Living is easy with the eyes closed* is the Spain of the 1960s: gray and contradictory, still under the authoritarian rule and tutelage of Franco, and with a generation over which the fear of a past war is still imminent, and a younger generation anxious to live freer, both practically and morally.

This generational contrast is even wider in the southern region of Spain, in the very poor region of Almeria, where massive tourism and the foreign super production shooting attracted to the area, were confronted with the scarcity of resources and the backwardness of the region.

In this context, the arrival of John Lennon to participate in the shooting of *How the war was Won* by Richard Lester, awakened the eagerness for change on the part of the teenage generation as symbols of freedom, new morals and progress were starting to infiltrate Spain.

Nevertheless, the Lennon that lands in Spain is in crisis. He has launched his well descriptive song, *Help*. He had doubts about the future of the Beatles, he was also experimenting with drugs and found himself on the edge of a professional and personal divorce, but he found in Almeria the retreat that he needed to think. It opened an introspective period in which his songs start to tell become more intimate, of his childhood memories, and of his frustrations, some of them triggered by the massive success of the Beatles. Musical history tells us that *Strawberry Fields Forever*, one of his more intimate pieces, was composed in Almeria during this period.

However Lennon is not the main character of this story but an unreachable goal, a symbol...

The real stars are the three characters of the Spain of that moment. The first is driven by enthusiasm, a challenging and stimulating teacher that suspects that the social reforms have more to do with the personal interests than with a political plan. The other two are youngsters confronting their reality in a very different way, learning to grow up and take personal responsibility and to stop others deciding their destiny for them.

These three represent three different ways of rebelling against ones surroundings. These are not historic characters, but anonymous people that with a dedicated and intimate fight, helped to change the future of a country. The real characters of any reform are carried out by the average man, and not heroes.

These three dreamers can be contrasted against the secondary characters, which are closer and more representative of a staler and old fashioned Spain, in this instance also shown with a conditional humanistic approach. Understanding one side and the other is the challenge of the film without offering a more comfortable side, but to show the vital circumstances that put each part in its position.

The formula to recreate that period is to use the personal proximity, from the identification of the quotidian routines that have absolute repercussions. After all, the real social heroes are those capable to overcome the expectation and to outreach the margins.

## **ABOUT THE CAST**

In period movies I always impose a rule to select a cast that communicates the character and the way of life of that time. I give precedent to this rule over the characterization or the costumes. It is about finding someone that somehow illustrates the values of the period in an intimate form, not just to "make it look like" that character.

For Antonio's character I needed someone like Javier Cámara. He is an actor of today, but I can easily see him moving around Alfredo Landa, López Vázquez, or Agustín González (actors of the 60s in Spain). Without losing any subtlety he moves around a scene with full transparency.

His tone and physical presence made him perfect to reveal the character. One brush of Sancho and another one of Quixote, with idealistic aspirations and a total grasp on reality. Javier Cámara contained for me the tenderness and proximity of some of the teachers of our childhood, of those that change one's way to think, like what Machado (Spanish writer) illustrated in his writings; the stamp of a good man.

Selecting the actress for the character of Belén was more complicated. Most young people in their 20's are representative of life in their current society, and I was searching for someone who could represent the youth of the 60's in Spain, to add the original Andalusian origin of the Belén that is written in the script. When I saw Natalia Molina in a casting session, the fact that she was a total unknown attracted my attention immediately... even the name was representative of a 60's Spanish actress. Could she be the one that we had spent months searching for?

Natalia was direct, with a purity that involved her beauty as a way of being. It was a risk to cast someone new for a part with so much responsibility, but to my surprise she was very self-aware and made continuous contributions to the role, and was completely committed to her

work – so much so that sometimes I wondered if her resume was wrong, and that she must have had at least 10 other lead roles. Later on, I realized that what I saw was nothing more than the pure profile of a born actress, one of those actors that later one gets congratulated on for having discovered them, when in reality one knows that you are the fortunate one, as a director you are blessed to have someone like that cross your path.

With Francesc Colomer we had the advantage of knowing him from his role in *Pan Negro* and his unique stare immediately came to mind. Coming from a world outside of the big cities, gave Francesc a purity difficult to find these days. He was not the child of *Pan Negro* anymore, but a 16 year old, with all of the difficulties that that entails. The Juanjo part is one very close to me, and that made it even harder to decide on someone for the role. The value of a time past that he had were what finally convinced me.

It is hard to find a teen so honest, direct and intelligent and in no way an exhibitionist. He charmed the whole crew with a humility that would usually be found in someone much older. Francesc is someone that can make silence and glances powerful. In this role, in which silence says a lot, I cannot imagine anybody better. He also added something beautiful when he stopped to observe his acting peers, showing a sincere admiration and a wish to learn that nowadays is hard to find.

## CAST

## **JAVIER CÁMARA**

Javier made his debut in 1991 in the play *El caballero de Olmedo*. On television he appeared in *¡Ay señor, señor!* and, after appearing in *Torrente: el brazo tonto de la ley* (1998), he became famous in Spain for his role in the sitcom series *Siete vidas*.

After appearing in *Sex and Luica*, his next role was working with Almodovar in *Habla con ella*, and he has subsequently worked with Almodóvar on *La mala educación* and *Los amantes pasajeros*.

Entre otros galardones, en el Festival de Málaga fue premiado en dos ocasiones como Mejor Actor (en 2008 por *Fuera de carta* y en 2003 por *Torremolinos 73*) y la Unión de Actores reconoció su trabajo en 2004 por *La mala educación*, en 1999 por *Siete vidas* y en 1994 por la serie *¡Ay, Señor, Señor!*. Ha sido nominado en cinco ocasiones a los premios Goya.

## **NATALIA DE MOLINA**

This young actress born in Linares (Province of Jaen) and brought up in Granada, studied Musical Interpretation in ESAD, Malaga to reinforce her singing and dancing. Later she moved to Madrid to continue her artistic training in Garaje Lumiere and in the Estudio Corazza.

She has mainly appeared in theatre, and her highlights include *La Mirilla* with director Sergio Candel. In August 2012 she shot her first feature film, *Temporal*, from first time Director Catxo.

*Living is easy with eyes closed* is her first starring star role.

## **FRANCESC COLOMER**

Francesc studied at the Vic Institute of Theatre in Barcelona, where he was also born. In his first film, *Pan Negro/Black Bread* by Agusti Villaronga, Francesc received the Goya for Best Actor - Newcomer and the film went on to be nominated by Spain at the Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language film.

Francesc's second film was *Barcelona, night of destiny* for Director Dani de la Orden. *Living is easy with eyes closed* is his third film.



## **EDITED HIGHLIGHTS FROM AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TRUEBA IN THE INDEPENDENT (UK)**

David Trueba's film *Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed* takes its title from The Beatles' song "Strawberry Fields Forever", which John Lennon wrote while he was in Almeria, Spain, acting in Richard Lester's *How I Won the War* in 1966.

Lennon may only have had a minor role playing Musketeer Gripweed in Lester's war comedy, yet his presence in the film was the big story; his image used to sell the movie on posters at the time and on the DVD today. It was during the making of the film that Lennon first came to wear what would become his trademark circular glasses. In his only non-music related acting turn, Lennon played a soldier revealed to have once supported Fascist Oswald Mosley.

Trueba's tale starts with news footage, where it's postulated that following on from The Beatles' sell-out tour of America, Lennon was unhappy with the foursome and was considering acting as a career.

The action then segues into a whimsical tale about English teacher Antonio San Roman (a brilliant performance by Spanish national treasure Javier Cámara), who has his students recite Beatles songs as a learning tool. One amusing early scene sees his pupils each relay one line of "Help!" On hearing that Lennon is filming in Almeria, the Beatles fan drives across Franco's Spain in the hope of meeting him. Remarkably the film is based on a true story.

"I read the story in a paper in 2006," says Trueba. "They were celebrating 40 years of Lennon being in Almeria, and I read about this teacher who made this trip and asked Lennon to make corrections in his notebook. The teacher used to listen to Radio Luxembourg and write down the lyrics of their songs, as he heard them, however he couldn't get the lyrics from the *Revolver* album right as they started using more psychedelic words. When they met, the teacher gave him the notebook and Lennon corrected the lyrics and filled in the gaps. He also corrected songs written by Paul McCartney and George Harrison – 'Eleanor Rigby' and 'Taxman'."



Michael Crawford, Lennon and Lester at a press conference for the movie in Hamburg, 1966

The real-life teacher Juan Carrón Gañán is now 88 years old and still teaching English. "The notebook still exists," says Trueba. "The funny thing is that Lennon used colors when correcting the lyrics. For 'Yellow Submarine' he used a yellow pen, and if he wrote the word 'green' he would use a green pen. You only have to look at the way he did the corrections and you think this guy must have been funny." After this meeting, The Beatles included printed sheets of their song lyrics with their following albums.

The climactic scenes take place around the set of *How I Won the War*, and I ask the 44-year-old at the San Sebastián Film Festival if he got in touch with Lester to discuss the shoot. He responds, "I tried. I was passed on an email from someone I know and I wrote to him. I don't know if he's maybe too old, or tired, I suppose he is tired of talking about this Beatles adventure – he directed two movies with them – and probably everyone is asking him about them, or maybe he didn't get the email.

"I didn't push it too hard because I didn't want to be distracted by the Lennon story or the *How I Won the War* stuff. I knew a guy who worked on the movie – he told me Lennon hated shooting the movie; he was tired, bored, didn't like Almeria and wondered what he was doing there."

It turns out that 81-year-old Lester didn't get the email. "I've heard of the director," Lester informs me from his West Sussex home, "but I hadn't heard about this film before."



Acting on a whim: Natalia de Molina, Francesc Colomer, Javier Camàra and Ramon Fontserè in 'Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed'

Lester retired from filmmaking after making the Paul McCartney concert movie *Get Back* in 1991. Born in 1932 in Philadelphia, he moved across the Atlantic to London in 1953 and began directing television shows. In between making two films starring The Beatles he won the Palme d'Or in 1965 for his sexual comedy "The Knack... and How to Get It". An influential director in the 1960s and 1970s, his career also saw him controversially take over the directorial reigns from Richard Donner on "Superman II" and make three films based on Alexandre Dumas's "The Three Musketeers".

The Beatles personally chose Lester to make "A Hard Day's Night" after seeing his Oscar-nominated short film "The Running Jumping & Standing Still Film" (1960). The director says of Lennon's demeanor on his Spanish set, "He wasn't unhappy, he was bored. There is always boredom on set, but when we did the first two films together there were four of them and they could form a defensive manoeuvre against the rest of the world, which was fine. We all accepted that. Here he was on his own and he was treated normally, as every actor would be. Never in the time that I knew John did I have words with him, ever. I had great respect for him because I thought that he was an interesting and serious young man."

But Lester admits there were some drawbacks in casting him: "I didn't think, and I should have, that if you put someone like John in a straight acting role and you tell everybody that it's a straight acting role they won't believe you. They think sooner or later he'll play the guitar. I think it did John and I a disservice because people were disappointed and they wanted more."

The film received mixed notices, but Lester says there are no regrets about his decision to cast the Liverpudlian: "He had a certain quality that an ordinary actor would not have given. It was a small part that I think he did extremely well." There were other issues that came with Lennon's being "more popular than Jesus Christ", as he once famously described The Beatles. "We were in a small studio just outside Hamburg and we went to cut John's hair off," recalls Lester. "As they started chopping his hair, about six or seven people were clearing up, and I remember thinking the Germans are so obsessively neat. It never occurred to me that they were getting plastic bags and his hair was being flogged all around Hamburg for 20 years."

There is a scene in *Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed* shot in Santa Isabel, the villa where Lennon stayed during the production that inspired him to write "Strawberry Fields Forever". Lennon said Santa Isabel reminded him of a Salvation Army garden near his childhood home in Liverpool called Strawberry Fields. Lester says, "I never actually went to John's villa. I know that Neil Aspinall was with him. I'm not sure about Cynthia [Lennon]. I think she came out to visit, whether she was there all the time or not, I don't know. Ringo [Starr] came out with Maureen [Cox, Starr's first wife]."

As for the writing of "Strawberry Fields Forever", Lester had no idea about that, nor did he know about the teacher who met with Lennon. It seems that even Lester is learning something new about his production, 47 years after it took place.

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## STRAWBERRY FIELDS FOREVER – LYRICS

Let me take you down, cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about  
Strawberry Fields forever

Living is easy with eyes closed  
Misunderstanding all you see  
It's getting hard to be someone but it all works out  
It doesn't matter much to me  
Let me take you down, cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about  
Strawberry Fields forever

No one I think is in my tree  
I mean it must be high or low  
That is you can't you know tune in but it's all right  
That is I think it's not too bad  
Let me take you down, cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about  
Strawberry Fields forever

Always, no sometimes, think it's me  
But you know I know when it's a dream  
I think I know I mean a "Yes" but it's all wrong  
That is I think I disagree  
Let me take you down, cos I'm going to Strawberry Fields  
Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about  
Strawberry Fields forever  
Strawberry Fields forever  
Strawberry Fields forever