

*Strand Releasing presents*

# FROM AFAR

**A FILM BY LORENZO VIGAS**

*Starring Alfredo Castro and Luis Silva*

*Official Selection:  
Venice Film Festival  
Toronto International Film Festival  
AFI Fest  
Miami International Film Festival*

**Country of Origin:** Venezuela / Mexico

**Format:** DCP/2.66/Color

**Sound Format:** D-Cinema 48kHz 5.1

**Running Time:** 93 minutes

**Genre:** Drama

**Rating:** Not Rated

**In Spanish with English Subtitles**

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## **SYNOPSIS**

Wealthy middle-aged Armando (Alfredo Castro) lures young men to his home with money. He doesn't want to touch, only watch from a strict distance. He also follows an elderly businessman with whom he seems to have had a traumatic relationship. Armando's first encounter with street thug Elder (Luis Silva) is violent, but this doesn't discourage the lonely man's fascination with the tough handsome teenager. Financial interest keeps Elder visiting him regularly and an unexpected intimacy emerges. But Armando's haunted past looms large, and Elder commits the ultimate act of affection on Armando's behalf.

FROM AFAR is the shattering feature debut from Venezuelan writer-director Lorenzo Vigas. Set in Caracas' chaotic lower class communities, Vigas' turbulent story reveals the complex bond between two men worlds apart.

## **COMMENTS FROM WRITER – DIRECTOR LORENZO VIGAS**

### **FROM AFAR**

Armando is a man that doesn't have the capacity to fully relate emotionally with others. In a certain way he is an autistic in his city. The Spanish title can be translated literally to "From Afar." It's a reference to the distance and separation between Armando and the objects of his desire – his "look but don't touch" attitude. It also has something to do with the separation with the object of his obsession, represented by the older businessman. The idea of making a film about a man who struggles to connect emotionally to others was very attractive to me.

### **MISSING FATHER**

Since my short film LOS ELEFANTES NUNCA OLVIDAN ("Elephants Never Forget"), I have been working with the subject of the consequences of paternal trauma. LOS ELEFANTES NUNCA OLVIDAN was about a brother and sister's vengeful feelings toward an abusive father. DESDE ALLÁ explores this subject from different angles: the bounds between Armando and Elder at the beginning of their relationship tighten due to a lack of parental reference for both of them, the heavy bounds between Armando and his missing father. All those elements work together to give form to the psychological composition of the film.

### **FROM ILLUSION TO REALITY**

A sudden obsession towards this young man Elder is ignited. Maybe because Armando is a person that does not allow anybody to touch him, he is suddenly struck by that brutal hit. From this moment on, an illusion is created: to be capable of establishing a close emotional relationship with someone. But can this become a reality? Elder is a young man with a strong and uncontrollable energy. They are from very different worlds, but Armando's serenity and the security that he offers are things that Elder has never had in his life before. Armando's decision to take care of him, to heal him and to nourish him, are attentions that without any doubt, Elder experiences for the first time. The comforts offered by Armando unleash emotions not previously felt by the young man.

### **ALFREDO CASTRO AS ARMANDO**

Alfredo was my first choice among Latin American actors. I had seen him in TONY MANERO and NO. I knew he could be Armando. When I met him, I was absolutely sure. Alfredo has a deep emotional richness and also the ability to withhold all those feelings, which is exactly what I was looking for. When he read the script and saw my short film, he was immediately enthusiastic about playing Armando. Working with Alfredo was crucial to this film. He is full of ideas. He was always very active before and during the shoot. He fell in love with his character and took it even further.

## **LUIS SILVA AS ELDER**

From the moment I met Luis, I knew that I wanted him to play Elder. He had all the elements that I was looking for: a strong animal impulse, street smarts. In addition to being charismatic, he also has a dark side, a suffering look. No camera test was needed. I was sure he was the one to incarnate Elder. He was only 19 when we shot *DESDE ALLÁ*, but he was no stranger to a rough life, gangs and violence. He comes from a Venezuelan neighborhood even tougher than seen in the film. Luis took his commitment to the role very seriously. I think he absolutely has what it takes to continue in acting. He's enthusiastic, precise, sharp. He still has a lot to learn but his talent is as big as his heart.

## **A NATURAL TENSION**

I had no apprehensions about casting an inexperienced actor with a seasoned professional. I was confident it was going to work. I didn't rehearse with Alfredo and Luis before the shoot began. I wanted them to meet during the shoot. I knew there would be a natural tension between them and I wanted to capture all that in the film. We tried to shoot chronologically so that the energy of their relationship would transform simultaneously on-screen during the weeks of shooting. I like mixing professional and non-professional actors. It's a good way of creating tension. It doesn't allow the professionals to relax at any time. I also used this technique in my short film *LOS ELEFANTES NUNCA OLVIDAN*.

## **WHAT ALL HUMAN BEINGS SHARE**

The social and economic crisis in Venezuela has triggered many changes. We have the highest inflation in the world, resulting in huge social gap between the rich and the poor. Elder is drawn into a different world by its affluence, but as the story carries on, this initial financial attraction develops into an emotional one. *DESDE ALLÁ* takes place in Venezuela in this current situation, but these same motivations could happen in any other country. It is this great lack of affection that bounds the two characters together, and that lack of affection is something that all human beings share.

## **EMOTIONAL NEEDS**

We live in a very macho society. At first, Elder is presented as a young alpha male, but something happens to his self-confidence when he encounters a man capable of actually stabbing himself. Witnessing this act makes him question his manhood, and alpha Elder turns into more of a beta personality. Although *DESDE ALLÁ* centers around Armando and Elder, this is a story that has a universal dimension no matter the country or the gender. If an older woman would have offered Elder all that Armando gave him, he would have probably fallen in love with her. The relationship portrayed in *DESDE ALLÁ* is more about emotional needs than sex. That said, gay issues are also highlighted in the film. Most Latin American cultures are still very conservative regarding homosexuality, and homophobia can be found at all social levels. Elder witnesses how devastating homophobia can be in *DESDE ALLÁ*.

## **FATHER ISSUES**

In *DESDE ALLÁ*, the relationship of Armando and Elder takes on certain father-son aspects – affection, guidance, discipline, control. Elder confesses his deepest father issues, but Armando remains secretive. He has a haunting journey in the film regarding his own past. He is attached to a specific moment of his past, a childhood moment when something happened in connection to his father. Something that marked Armando for the rest of his life, giving him a virgin complex. This man is not only his torment, but also his obsession as he is totally dependent on him. How can he liberate himself?

## **THE NEIGHBORHOODS OF CARACAS**

It was very important to show Caracas in all of its social complexity. *DESDE ALLÁ* shows all the social strata of Caracas. From the poor “Bloques” of Caricuao, to the wealthy class neighborhoods. And in between - “La Candelaria”, the area where Armando lives. It’s one of those middle class neighborhoods that has been transformed into a lower income area. Due to the heavy economic crisis that the country is suffering, Caracas and all of Venezuela’s infrastructure has suffered much transformation. The country has suffered a lot from the heavy economic crises resulting in big transformations of Caracas and all of Venezuela’s infrastructure.

## **LIKE A GHOST**

Not to control the streets. It was a very important decision that was taken at the beginning of the shooting. I wanted to have all of Caracas’ street life in the film. There is an energy that we could not have achieved otherwise. I wanted to take advantage of this and try to present Armando as a ghost, almost invisible, surrounded by people. He is physically present walking on the streets, but his emotions are trapped in the past. He is there but, at the same time, he is not. The challenge was to reach this goal while avoiding that our Chilean actor Alfredo Castro does not look alien or of our place. We worked a lot with him watching people in the streets. We decided to shoot scenes out of focus and with distorted depth of field, making him appear and disappear from our perception.

## **A GOOD SENSE OF NARRATIVE**

I started working with cinematographer Sergio Armstrong (*THE CLUB*, *NO*) months before principal photography. Sergio likes to be involved in every aspect during the making of the film. He starts during preproduction to help with decisions about casting, costumes, art direction, etc. We discussed at length the way in which we would film Armando, how to present him almost as a ghost walking the streets of Caracas. On set he would propose camera placements, and take on board my ideas on the composition of many shots. I have been very close to photography all my life and I like to stay very close to the camera. Sergio has a sharp sense of narrative, which was important for this film.

## **THE SHOOT**

The film was shot in 9 weeks. My Venezuelan producer Rodolfo Cova designed the medium-sized crew which strived for the best possible results. We all had a strong collaboration and worked very hard at the service of the film. It was very exhausting but a lot of times the best performances come when the actor is very tired. The most emotionally demanding scenes were shot like this, but many simple scenes were shot very fast. In any case, at the end, a very special emotional bond was created between the actors Alfredo Castro and Luis Silva and myself.

## **PRODUCTION TEAM**

I feel lucky to have had a great production team to support me on my first feature *DESDE ALLÁ*. We were all close friends and watched each other grow as filmmakers. I wrote the screenplay based on a story defined with writer-director Guillermo Arriaga (*THE BURNING PLAIN*, *THE THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA*, *AMORES PERROS*, *21 GRAMS*). Guillermo helped me put my obsessions on paper, and he produced my short film *LOS ELEFANTES NUNCA OLVIDAN* (“Elephants Never Forget”), which gave me the opportunity to go to Cannes. I have known producer-director Michel Franco (*CHRONIC*) and producer-director Gabriel Ripstein (*600 MILES*) for a while. We have shared all the different versions of our scripts. We have discussed decisions when making films, from cinematographer to locations, to everything. I’ve known Venezuelan actor Edgar Ramirez (*CARLOS*, *POINT BREAK*, *HANDS OF STONE*) for a long time. He was very enthusiastic about this project and he has been so supportive in many aspects of the making of this film.

## **PARENTHOOD**

*DESDE ALLÁ* is the second of a series of three films that explore the subject of parenthood. The first was my short film *LOS ELEFANTES NUNCA OLVIDAN* (“Elephants Never Forget”). I worked for two years on the screenplay of *LA CAJA* (“The Box”) in collaboration with Paula Markovitch. I am very enthusiastic about shooting the film next year in Mexico, again with producers Michel Franco and Gabriel Ripstein. The subject of parenthood has obsessed me and *DESDE ALLÁ* is part of that obsession. *LA CAJA* will be the last chapter.

## **LORENZO VIGAS – BIOGRAPHY**

*DESDE ALLÁ* (*FROM AFAR*) is Lorenzo Vigas’ feature debut. *DESDE ALLÁ* makes its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival followed by official presentations at the Toronto and San Sebastian film festivals. Vigas’ narrative short *LOS ELEFANTES NUNCA OLVIDAN* (*ELEPHANTS NEVER FORGET*) was presented in Cannes (Critics’ Week), Clermont-Ferrand and New Directors-New Films (New York).

Son of artist Oswaldo Vigas, Lorenzo Vigas was born in Merida, Venezuela, in 1967. He studied molecular biology before moving to New York in 1995. He attended several film workshops at New York University. In 1998, he returned to Venezuela to direct the TV

documentary series “Expedición”. Between 1999 and 2001, he directed several documentaries for the production company CINESA.

### **ALFREDO CASTRO AS ARMANDO**

Alfredo Castro has appeared in several films by Chilean filmmaker Pablo Larrain, including the award-winning THE CLUB, NO and ESCAPE. His roles in Larrain’s TONY MANERO (as a man obsessed with John Travolta in SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER) and POST MORTEM (as a morgue worker in search of a missing cabaret dancer) both won him much acclaim and awards. He also appeared in Italian films – Alessandro Lunardelli’s IL MONDO FINO IN FONDO (UP TO THE WORLD) and Daniele Cipri’s E STATO IL FIGLIO (aka MON PERE VA ME TUER).

Born Alfredo Castro Gómez in Santiago de Chile, he is also an accomplished theater and television actor, writer (co-writer credit for TONY MANERO), professor, theater director and founder of Teatro La Memoria, a milestone in the history of contemporary Chilean theater.

### **LUIS SILVA AS ELDER**

Luis Silva makes his screen debut in Lorenzo Vigas’ DESDE ALLÁ (FROM AFAR). The 21-year-old grew up in one of Caracas’ toughest neighborhoods. He is currently preparing to pursue an acting career after DESDE ALLÁ is released.

## MAIN CAST

<b>Alfredo Castro</b>	Armando
<b>Luis Silva</b>	Elder
<b>Jericó Montilla</b>	Ameila
<b>Catherina Cardozo</b>	Maria
<b>Marcos Moreno</b>	Manuel
<b>Jorge Luis Bosque</b>	Fernando
<b>Jeralt Jiménez</b>	Young Guy on Bus
<b>Felipe Massiani</b>	Javier Marcano
<b>Auffer Camacho</b>	Mermelada
<b>Ivan Peña</b>	Yoni
<b>Greymer Acosta</b>	Palma
<b>Joretsis Ibarra</b>	Deysi

## MAIN CREW

<b>Written and Directed by</b>	Lorenzo Vigas
<b>Based on a story by</b>	Guillermo Arriaga, Lorenzo Vigas
<b>Director of Photography</b>	Sergio Armstrong G. ADFCH
<b>Art Direction</b>	Matias Tikas
<b>Editor</b>	Isabela Monteiro de Castro
<b>Production Designer</b>	Waldir Xavier
<b>Casting</b>	Beto Benitez
<b>Sound Recordist</b>	Mario Nazoa
<b>Costumes</b>	Marisela Marin
<b>Make-up</b>	Stella Jacobs
<b>Produced by</b>	Rodolfo Cova, Guillermo Arriaga, Michel Franco, Lorenzo Vigas
<b>Executive Producers</b>	Edgar Ramirez, Gabriel Ripstein

a FACTOR RH & MALANDRO FILMS production  
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