



Official Selection

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Toronto International
Film Festival 2019



MOSTRA INTERNAZIONALE
D'ARTE CINEMATOGRAFICA
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA 2019
Official Selection

Emma

a film by Pablo Larraín



Synopsis

A woman with short blonde hair is looking down with a serious expression. A hand is holding a lit match near her face, with the flame glowing. The background is dark and moody.

After a shocking incident upends her family life and marriage to a tempestuous choreographer, Ema, a reggaeton dancer, sets out on an odyssey of personal liberation, in this incendiary drama about art, desire, and the modern family from director Pablo Larraín.

Adoptive parents Ema (Mariana Di Girolamo) and Gastón (Gael García Bernal) are artistic free spirits in an experimental dance troupe whose lives are thrown into chaos when their son Polo is involved in a shockingly violent incident. As her marriage crumbles in the wake of their decision to abandon the child, Ema embarks on an odyssey of liberation and self-discovery as she dances and seduces her way into a daring new life. Centering on the sinuous, electrifying art of reggaeton dance, Ema is an incendiary portrait of a lady on fire, the story of an artistic temperament forced to contend with societal pressure and the urge to conform. From world-class director Pablo Larrain (Jackie, Neruda) comes another psychologically acute exhumation of Latin American life under restriction featuring an unforgettable heroine who is determined to move freely through the world, as she electrifies everyone and everything around her.



**Pablo,
Larraín**

Born in Santiago in 1976, Pablo Larrain is one of Chile's greatest movie directors as well as a major producer (through his Fabula company).

Filmography

2019: Ema
2016: Jackie
2016: Neruda
2015: The Club
2012: No
2010: Post Mortem
2008: Tony Manero
2006: Fuga

Not for the weak-hearted, his films are straightforward, generally aggressive and interspersed with violence. They paint a hard-hitting portrait of his country, Chile, notably in a trilogy covering fifteen years of national history from 1973 (the last days of Salvador Allende's presidency in *POST MORTEM* (2010)) to 1978 (the height of General Pinochet's reign of terror in *TONY MANERO* (2008)) to 1988 (the last days of Pinochet in *NO* (2012)). *NO* was Chile's official selection for the 2016 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Another characteristic of Larrain's cinema is the unusual perspective with which he chooses to approach his topics. As a vehicle for attacking Pinochet, the writer-director presents us with a strange love story; narrates the misdeeds of a petty thief imitating John Travolta and portrays an advertising executive creating a campaign to defeat the dictator. *FUGA* (2006), his first effort, was about a composer going mad while *EL CLUB* (2015) takes place in a beach house where priests who have «sinned» are sidelined. *EL CLUB* was nominated for several awards, including the Golden Globes as Best Foreign Film and won the Silver Bear for Best Director at the Berlin International Film Festival. His most recent releases, *NERUDA* and *JACKIE* (both 2016) also enjoyed great international success, including nominations for The Academy Awards, the Golden Globe and the SAG Awards for Jackie.

Pablo Larrain




When did you become interested in reggaeton dance?

Describe your heroine Ema in your own words. What does she want out of life?

Up until before this film, I had no particular interest in reggaeton. But during the production process, I got to know it and understand why the entire generation that is represented in this film listens to this music. It has a rhythm that is everywhere, like any strong element that comes from pop culture. You're there and you're forced to live with it. It's a cultural exercise that has its own ethical and aesthetic existence. I understand it. I learn from it and it ends up interesting me. I actually kind of love it.

Ema is a paradigm: she's a character of characters. Daughter, mother, sister, wife, lover and leader. She's very powerful and presents a striking, beautiful sort of femininity. She's motivated by relentless individualism, as she clearly knows what she wants and is capable of seducing those around her in order to line up her destiny. She wants to be a mother and have a family; perhaps what moves and motivates her the most is love.

Interview with **Pablo Larraín**


A woman with blonde hair is shown from the chest up, looking upwards and to the right. The background is a dark blue bokeh of light spots, with a larger, brighter blue circular light source behind her. The text is overlaid on the top left of the image.

Describe Ema and Gastón's dynamic — what binds them together?

Where did you find your lead actress Mariana Di Girolamo?

This is a couple that has a lot of things in common: their professions, cultural interests, dance. They have a deep love for one another. I think they're a couple that looks dysfunctional, but in the end, they turn out to be quite organic.

I saw a picture of Mariana in a newspaper. I got a hold of her and I met her at a café in order to get to know her. Ten minutes into the conversation, I was offering her the film's title role. I thought that she had an intense enigma, a powerful mystery, and that she had a lot of levels, intellectually, physically, and sensorially, which meant that she could be seen and read from many angles. Mariana does something very powerful with Ema, because she becomes that vehicle, that pop-punk cultural electricity that the film has, which guides the spectator down an unknown path that is surprising, captivating, and defiant.



You're known for making «autopsies of the past» — is your latest film an autopsy of the future?

How was it different working with Gabriel García Bernal this time around?

What else would you like audiences to take away from this movie?

I don't think this is an autopsy of the future: it's a testimony of today. The people from the generation that we can observe in this film, who were probably born during this century or towards the end of the previous one, belong to a generation that dances without any sort of shame. They express themselves with their bodies and with music in a way that is completely different to my generation. This is my first film set in present-day Chile, where I speak of a generation that isn't my own. So it's new. It was a very illuminating and fascinating process.

Gael is one of the strongest Spanish-speaking actors out there. He's a solid guy, brilliant and a great friend. A piece of genius. So it's a pleasure and an honor to work with him once again.

I have no idea what the spectator will take away from the film, because the film isn't a closed-off piece; it allows for a space, a crack through which the spectator can enter and exit so that each person can provide closure to it from his or her own biography. For each person, Ema will be a different film.



Mariana Di Girolamo Arteaga was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1990 and comes from a family of outstanding artists. She is the daughter of visual artists Paolo Di Girolamo Quesney and Lucía Arteaga Vial; niece of actress Claudia Di Girolamo Quesney and granddaughter of Claudio Di Girolamo Carlini, famous playwright and Italian director.

Mariana studies acting at the prestigious theater school of the Catholic University of Chile. She made her debut in 2014, on the TV series *PITUCA SIN LUCAS*. Her work on television were followed by *POBRE GALLO* (2016) and *PERDONA NUESTROS PECADOS* (2017). She is currently on the series *LA JAURÍA* (in post-production) and *RÍO OSCURO*, where she stars alongside her aunt Claudia Di Girolamo.

Her theatre debut came in 2015 in Juan Radrigán's take on Shakespeare's classic *THE TEMPEST*, and in 2018 she joined the cast of *ROMEO AND JULIAN* under the direction of Carlos Urra. Her first feature film was *CONSTITUTION* (2015) by Leonardo Medel. *EMA* is her first leading role in cinema.

Mariana Di Girolamo



Award-winning actor Gael García Bernal began performing in stage productions with his parents in Mexico and later studied at the Central School for Speech and Drama in London. He has acted in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *AMORES PERROS* and *BABEL*, Alfonso Cuarón's *Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN*, Carlos Carrera's *THE CRIME OF FATHER AMARO*, Walter Salles' *THE MOTORCYCLE DIARIES*, Pedro Almodóvar's *BAD EDUCATION*, James Marsh's *THE KING*, Michel Gondry's *THE SCIENCE OF SLEEP*, Hector Babenco's *EL PASADO*, Carlos Cuarón's *RUDO Y CURSI*, Fernando Meirelles' *BLINDNESS*, Lukas Moodysson's *MAMMOTH*, Jim Jarmusch's *THE LIMITS OF CONTROL*, Icíar Bollain's *EVEN THE RAIN*, Pablo Larraín's *NO* and *NERUDA*, Roberto Sneider's *YOU'RE KILLING ME SUSANA* and Pablo Fendrik's *EL ARDOR*, amongst others.

In 2016 he received a Golden Globe as Best Comedy Actor for the Amazon series *MOZART IN THE JUNGLE*. He also portrayed the voice of Héctor in Disney-Pixar's *COCO*, which won an Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2018.

García Bernal made his directorial debut with *DEFICIT*. He also directed the short film *THE LETTER* for the full-length feature film *8*, the short film *LUCIO* for the collective Mexican film *Revolución*, the four documentary shortfilms *THE INVISIBLES* for Amnesty International. He has also directed episodes in *MOZART IN THE JUNGLE* and *AQUÍ EN LA TIERRA*. *CHICUAROTES* is his second feature film, which premiered at Cannes Film Festival (2019).

Gael, García Bernal



Main Cast

Mariana Di Girolamo: Ema

Gael García Bernal: Gastón

Paola Giannini: Raquel

Santiago Cabrera: Aníbal

Cristián Suárez: Polo

Technical Details

Original and international title: Ema

Duration: 102 min / **Aspect Ratio:** 2.39:1

Format: 2K / **Sound:** Dolby Atmos / **Year:** 2019

Original Language: Spanish

Country of Production: Chile

Main Crew

Director: Pablo Larraín **Scriptwriters:** Guillermo Calderón, Pablo Larraín, Alejandro Moreno **Director of Photography:** Sergio Armstrong (ADFCH) **Editor:** Sebastián Sepúlveda **Music Composition:** Nicolas Jaar **Production Designer:** Estefanía Larraín **Choreographer:** José Vidal **Costume Designers:** Muriel Parra, Felipe Criado **Makeup and Hair Artist:** Margarita Marchi **Sound Designer:** Roberto Espinoza **Executive Producers:** Rocío Jadue, Mariane Hartard **Associated Producers:** Paula Kraushaar, Catalina Adoni, Alfredo Adoni **Producer:** Juan De Dios Larraín **Production Company:** Fabula



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