



FESTIVAL DE CANNES
2026 OFFICIAL SELECTION
COMPETITION

JAVIER BARDEM

VICTORIA LUENGO

BY THE DIRECTOR OF
AS BESTAS RODRIGO SOROGOYEN

WRITTEN
BY ISABEL PEÑA AND RODRIGO SOROGOYEN

THE BELOVED

Running time: 2h15

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SYNOPSIS

The acclaimed film director Esteban Martínez is a legend both for his films and for his past marked by violence and excess. For his new project, he offers his daughter Emilia a role under the pretext of helping her with her stalled acting career. Living together on set will foster a closeness they haven't shared for years, but it will also reopen old wounds that never healed.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The main word I repeated to myself while directing *The Beloved (El Ser Querido)* was unequivocally "experiment". I wanted to go further, explore unfamiliar territory, and try things we hadn't tried before.

From the script stage, we made a conscious decision to break away from the rules of the drama genre. The result was a strange and beautiful text about a father and his daughter, two seemingly ordinary people with family conflicts, existing in the world of cinema. That terrain was already unstable enough for me, or rather volatile, to continue down the path of experimentation. In my mind, it was the best way to proceed.

We had these characters involved in the filming of a movie. They are dedicated to telling a story. They light a set, put makeup on actors, dress them in costumes to build the story of soldiers in 1931 inside a fort in colonial Sahara. Just as they tell a story, our main characters, Esteban Martínez and Emilia, also tell their stories. The story of a dark past full of excesses and the story of abandonment. We all do it: we constantly tell stories to explain ourselves to the world and to ourselves. I became obsessed with the idea of how to tell the story of people who tell stories on so many levels.

That question led to the central challenge: How do I shoot this story?

I knew I needed to break away from my previous work. *The Beasts (As Bestas)* (2022) had a classic language, I wanted *The Beloved (El Ser Querido)* to be the total and radical antonym of that. I decided to shoot in every possible format. We shot in black and white, in color, in photochemical (65 mm, 35 mm, 16 mm, 8 mm); we filmed digitally and in Mini DV format. We alternated between different lenses throughout the shoot, allowing the film to contain multiple cinematic textures and perspectives.

I approached each sequence as its own self-contained story. Isn't a scene an independent unit of time and space?

From the start of the casting process, I tried to find performers who would go along with what I proposed, so that we could learn and surprise ourselves with what we do. I tried to take improvising as far as possible. We invented situations and scenes that weren't in the script. Dialogues that came up in previous rehearsals or on the day of shooting itself. The number of great actors who helped tell this story pushed me to try to play with all of them. To give each one their space and to be able to work with them to

get the most out of them, so that they felt part of this story. We always played with the intention of taking our story further, of reaching the highest possible levels of performance, in order to find that truth that is always so sought after in a film, mixing the acting talent we had with the playfulness and surprise that allowed the performers to believe they were in a real situation.

In this sense, there is a scene that perfectly illustrates this desire: a meeting in a restaurant between our two main characters. Father and daughter have arranged to meet for lunch so that he can offer her a role in his next film. For ten pages of the script, they talk about their present and their past, bringing to the surface the wounds of their condition. In the script, of course, it was a very tense scene, dominated by the feeling of two people who haven't seen each other for thirteen years and who have a history full of wounds.

How do you help actors achieve that feeling of real nervousness when you are going to see an important person in your life whom you haven't seen for years and with whom you have a complicated relationship? It is simple: by making sure they haven't actually seen each other before.

We took the riskiest path I have ever taken. I agreed with Javier Bardem and Victoria Luengo that we would shoot that scene on the first day of filming. I agreed with them that until that day, until the moment we said 'action,' they would not see each other, they would not rehearse, they would not talk to each other about their characters. I rehearsed with each of them separately. But not only that. I wanted that feeling to be as real as possible. Therefore, I suggested we shoot it all in one take, which was a very long take in which they could recreate a real hour-and-a-half meal in a restaurant, without any visible technical equipment. In addition to the ten pages of script they had to perform, they had to talk (or remain silent) for the hour and a half that the encounter would last.

Both actors took the plunge as soon as I suggested it, showing a determination and enthusiasm that I will be grateful for—and admire—for the rest of my life.

Unsurprisingly, Javier and Victoria were extremely nervous on the day of filming, but so would their characters, Martinez and Emilia, have been. The result is twenty minutes of scenes that, in my opinion, are pure gold. The silences, the doubts, the looks are the most real I have ever filmed.

Looking back, I can only feel satisfaction and gratitude. Satisfaction in having followed the path we set out at the beginning. That radical experimentation, that feeling of constantly putting ourselves to the test to tell this story in the way I imagined, without complexes. A very complicated, very intuitive way that sometimes seemed to make no sense, but in which I always believed. And grateful because I could not have done this alone. The technical and artistic team and my producing partners trusted me and gave their all to tell this story about *The Story*. A story about the making of a film. About the story of a director and an actress. About the stories of a daughter and a father. A film about filmmakers, about daughters and fathers. About, ultimately, all of us.

Rodrigo Sorogoyen – Director, 2026

A Q&A WITH DIRECTOR RODRIGO SOROGOYEN

From the womaniser in *Stockholm* to the politician of *The Candidate*, the policemen of *May God Save us*, or the peasants of *The Beasts*, your films have for the most part addressed the issue of masculinity. *The Beloved* attacks the subject with more precision...

I hadn't thought about it but it's a good observation. There are clearly recurrent themes in my films, but it's probably more due to my feelings at the time than a conscious intention. It is certain that when taking a step back, we find the theme of toxic masculinity on one level or another in *Stockholm*, *May God Save us*, *The Candidate*, the *Riot Police* series and of course, in *The Beasts*. However, with *The Beloved*, Isabel Peña and I didn't want to make it the central subject. Through the story of a father and his daughter, we wanted to talk about power relations, hierarchy, the world of cinema, and also about how times change, how some types of behaviour considered acceptable then are not today.

What came first, the father-daughter relationship or the desire to show a film shooting from behind the scenes?

Both came more or less at the same time. The starting point was this relationship but also the desire to work with Victoria Luengo and Javier Bardem. We thought that making them a father and daughter was a good way to bring them together. To that I quickly added my desire for the story to take place in the world of cinema. However, we did wonder for a long time. After all, these characters could be architects, and it wouldn't change anything in their relationship.

We had to work to make them evolve in the world of cinema so that it would create situations and feed the story. The trigger was when we became aware that being a director or a screenwriter is about creating stories while making that your profession. This is juxtaposed against the fact that in life everyone invents stories to gain a sense of their own life. Indeed, we all have our own truth about what we are experiencing; what Esteban unconsciously tells himself does not resonate with Emilia's reality and vice versa. A professional world where you have to make people believe in fiction was the perfect pretext to bring cinema into the story.

***The Beloved* shows how a film shoot can be a place of power between men and women. But also how it has evolved, generally, in recent years. We see women here; a director of photography, a producer or indeed his own daughter, all who oppose Esteban, tell him he can no longer act as he does. To what extent has society's new outlook on this question had an impact on this film?**

Some of these changes in society appeared while we were writing the screenplay. It was therefore natural for us to include them in the script. But there is still work to be done: I had a discussion with a friend who saw the film and told me that he didn't think it was credible that a Director of Photography would decide to walk out of a shoot because of the director's behaviour... I think it's a good time to put these questions on the table. Generally speaking, it is very important for Isabel and I to tell the story of the times we live in. It's a kind of obligation: not to

bear witness to the moment, to the world in which we live would be absurd to us.

How do you see the evolution between *The Beasts* which was about the construction of hatred and *The Beloved*, about the inability to rebuild filial love?

Again, this is something that I am not aware of. It seems to me to be a correct observation, but when I am making a film, I don't have the hindsight to analyse it. And even less time to think about it.

The form of *The Beloved*, which alternates between colour and black and white, and plays on sound is obviously very well thought out...

Once I've found the subject matter of a film, I think about the form, because I want it to be in cohesion with the story being told. On *The Beloved*, I think I took risks. But that is always the question I ask myself with each project: how to adapt the staging of a script. In *The Beasts*, it was by giving a certain style to the first half and another to the second, because we were exploring first the story of the male character, then that of the female character. I wondered if I should do the same on *The Beloved*, before telling myself that I had to mix the trajectories of Esteban and Emilia. But as they also learn to free themselves from their past I wanted to feel freer, and experiment. I just warned Isabel and my cinematographer beforehand, to be able to improvise scenes and dialogues. There are at least three scenes that were not in the script, which I conceived during filming.

***The Beloved* has things in common with your previous films; the *Riot Police* series and *The Beasts* both have two sequence shots of more than ten minutes. Is this a way of challenging yourself?**

It's a challenge that I love, but one that I'm only prepared to embark on because of the trust I have in my technical and artistic teams. Isabel and I love writing very long sequences, betting on maintaining the viewer's attention. That said, while it's something we'd like to do in all our films, it's not a necessity. If we don't find the right moment to put one in a scenario or if it seems gratuitous, we will do without. For the opening scene of *The Beloved*, we wanted to set up a lot of tension between Esteban and Emilia and also distill the information that the audience had about them. Beyond that, it was also a way for me to bring strength to this opening sequence and enjoy the talents of my actors even more, to try to get the most out of the scene from the outset.

Did Javier Bardem's choices depend also on who he is physically? After Denis Ménochet in *The Beasts*, there is almost a continuity between two actors who have a strong presence and an intense energy.

It wasn't the main reason, but it's certain that it played a role in Javier's case. He brings something very masculine to Esteban right away. It matched with the power dynamic that we wanted to give to this character. It also allowed us to play on his grey areas: there are a lot of fundamental elements in the lives of Esteban and of Emilia that remain off-screen; that are part of their past. Outside of filming, we have very often imagined, with Javier, what happened to him, his phases with alcoholism or drug addiction. The paradox of being in front of a very physical actor while imagining the inner disaster that his past might have been was stimulating.

How did you build the character of Emilia, which has its ambiguities? Does she accept the role offered to her by her father to reconnect with him or because it could boost her acting career?

I don't think we wanted to find a balance between their respective flaws, but one thing that was very clear was that we didn't want to tell the story of a woman who is a victim. So we imagined that she had suffered a lot when she was a child because of her father's abandonment but that her more peaceful relationship with her mother had given her a more stable base. That said, we made her an actress who isn't in demand much, precisely to leave a doubt about her reasons for agreeing to work with her father. Isabel and I love ambiguities: they allow us to play with the audience and their understanding of the characters.

However, you are careful not to judge them. There is no good or bad guy in *The Beloved*.

Here too, it is an obligation. It became unconscious: when I learn that someone has done something bad, I immediately wonder how he got there. Even if you can never justify certain types of behaviour or violence, there is always a reason for such acts. I can't bring myself to think that someone is essentially bad or good. My films and series echo this: in *Riot Police* or *The Candidate*, the characters can be good husbands, good fathers while being totally corrupt for example.

***The Beloved* is not the first film to explore the backstage of a shoot. Is it a narrative device that you like? Have you seen some of the films like *Day For Night* or *Contempt* before embarking on this project?**

Day For Night, yes. As much for fun as to see how Truffaut constructed it. But otherwise no. I try not to be influenced by other films especially since I prefer to be inspired by life. In any case, the context of *The Beloved* will offer many references to the viewers.



A Q&A WITH JAVIER BARDEM

Is the role of a director more particular to play than other roles for an actor?

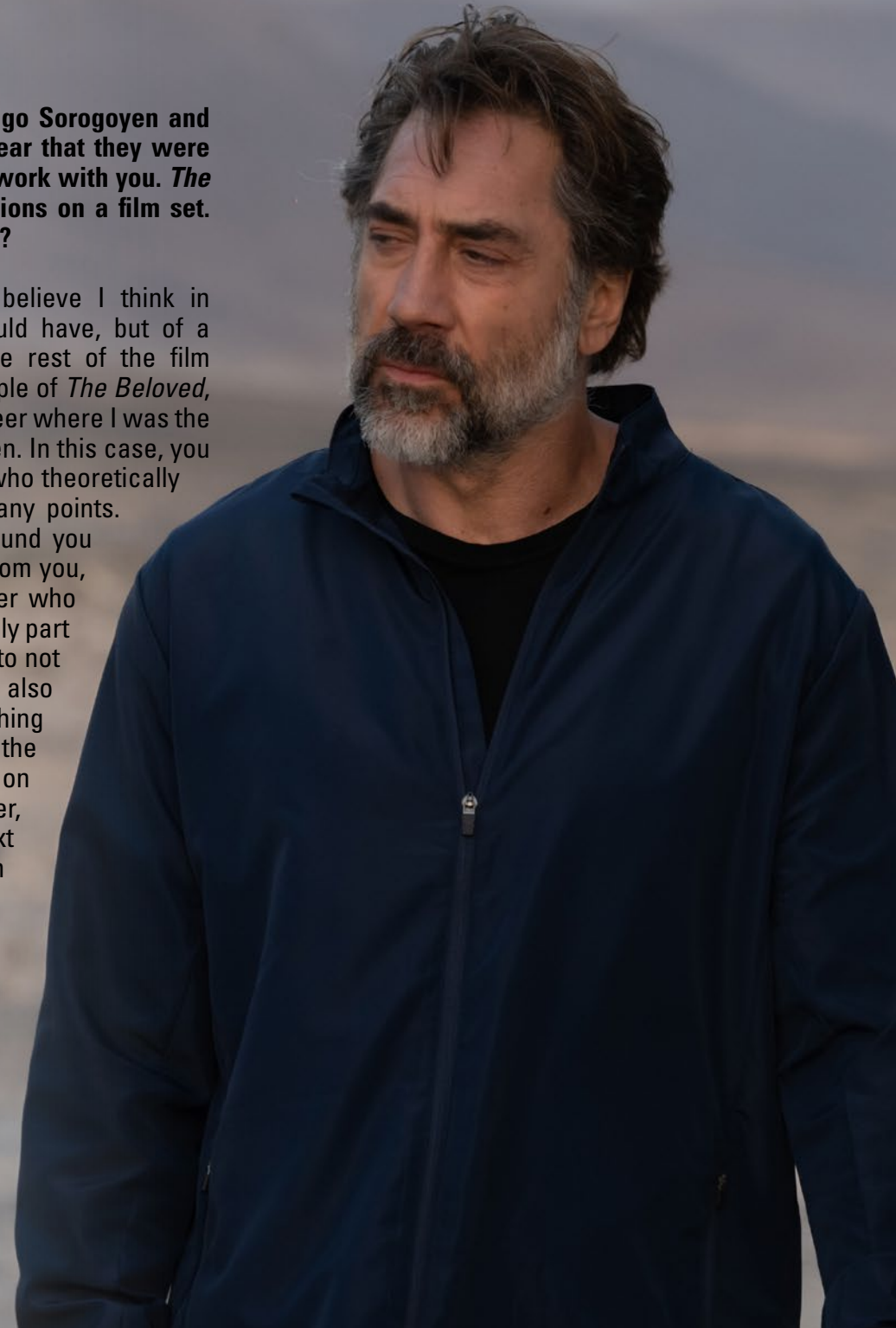
Not more so than playing any other role regardless of his profession: it only defines what he does, not who he is. However, it was necessary to make clear what type of director he is. Esteban was very acclaimed, almost revered; he has been immensely successful. He is also someone who really does his job with all his heart. I think all directors in the world have that in common. What makes him special in *The Beloved* is that he wants to do something that involves someone who is very important in his life while he hardly knows her. So he is a director who is not only trying to define the story he wants to tell in his film, but his own and that of his daughter just as much. More factually, I have many years of experience in filmmaking, and have worked with so many directors, which has been very beneficial to playing one. But the ones I have spent time with are all different. I don't think I based myself on the personality of one or the other for this role. Let's say that I rather picked small details of all of them, depending on what was going to be useful to me for this or that scene.

Rodrigo Sorogoyen's methods of preparation and filming for *The Beloved* were unique. Was it a different type of challenge for you?

In its own way, each film is a particular challenge. In this case, it was the first time that I was working with Rodrigo. Things are very simple when you take the time to discuss with a director - and especially in this case, one who is also a screenwriter. He explains to you what he wants to do, why he wants to do it in a certain way, and what he wants to express in this particular way. From there, you understand what makes sense in the film in question, including from an artistic point of view. All you have to do is comply. However, this method has indeed been special, in the best sense of the word. I just let myself be carried away by the way Rodrigo approaches things; I surrendered with all my trust to his filmmaking process, because he had made very clear that his primary objective was to get to some truth. Whether he wanted us to rehearse it or not, I would have said to him: "Okay, if that's how you want to do it, I'll do it..." I'm getting older and now I want to highlight the artistic part, the unique side of each director. If in addition, you decide beforehand that you accept his system of value and work, things will go smoothly. Besides, I can say that Rodrigo has given us a lot of space to be able to feel surprised, alive, absorbed by the most powerful scenes of the film. And given the result, I know it was indeed to be able to achieve moments of pure truth.

In recent interviews with Rodrigo Sorogoyen and Victoria Luego, they made it clear that they were impressed, even exhilarated to work with you. *The Beloved* addresses power relations on a film set. Are you aware of yours as a star?

A complex question... I don't believe I think in terms of any power that I would have, but of a responsibility, different from the rest of the film crew. If I take the specific example of *The Beloved*, I think it's the first time in my career where I was the oldest on set as well as on screen. In this case, you are supposed to be the person who theoretically has the most experience on many points. What's more, people who surround you will expect some reassurance from you, that you're going to be a partner who will support them, that you are fully part of the team. I had the daily duty to not only play as best as I could but also earn a collective trust. It has nothing to do with power but with the responsibility hopefully brought on by age and experience. However, the word «Power» in this context very often leads me to the notion of abuse. That of abusing one's status to create an environment or situation solely for one's own benefit. When someone does it it's always for that reason, to the detriment of others.



Beyond the context of the world of cinema, *The Beloved* also addresses the question of relations between men and women. And through it, the relationship to masculinity. In retrospect, in an era that questions this socially, how do you look at the roles of your early career, which were often macho characters?

I have two answers to this question: yes and no. No, insofar as, fortunately, we progress at all levels on the issue of toxic masculinity, by being able, men and women, to denounce it publicly and to point out those responsible. It is a considerable progress. Yes, in the sense that machismo and the false concept of what it is to be a man are increasingly distilled in the younger generation, especially through media and social media, from Instagram to TikTok, by an army of people who define themselves as victims of feminism. But feminism and machismo are two different things; machismo is a sense of power over women; feminism is equality of power for women and men. And yet some use it to compose an atmosphere of violence against women, verbal, emotional and even physical. It gives me the feeling that in Spain we are regressing very quickly towards the sixties. I grew up during this period when women were totally subjected to the will and desire of men. So we are in a position where on the one hand we are changing for the better, but we must remain very alert so as not to follow in the footsteps of the past.

In *The Beloved*, your co-star is Victoria Luengo, who is part of a new generation of actresses. Did you feel that you were in some way passing on your knowledge to her?

I loved working with her. She's an extraordinary young actress, for a start she is afraid of nothing. She can, artistically speaking, throw herself off any cliff without a net. My pleasure was doubled, again, by the responsibility I had to act at my best and be her partner unquestionably. I do share a lot of scenes with her in *The Beloved*, but above all I had never played such an intimate role as a father facing his daughter before. And yet it was very easy from our first meeting. This is thanks to her generosity of having been able to open up about her personal story and her wounds. It was only logical that I'd do the same with her. In fact, we protected each other mutually no matter what - through the difficulty of certain scenes or the echoes they sent back to us. Moreover, we were beautifully guided by Rodrigo, who never uses the discomfort or pain of others for his own benefit...



A Q&A WITH VICTORIA LUENGO

The preparation for *The Beloved* was unusual: Rodrigo Sorogoyen organised for you and Javier Bardem to meet several months before shooting, and then asked you to not be in contact again until the shooting...

Indeed, Rodrigo, Javier, Isabel (Peña, co-writer) and I met for the first time at Isabel's. They explained the project to us and talked about the screenplay. That's when Javier and I got to know each other. After this first meeting, Rodrigo asked us to not see each other again until shooting. Only one week before we started shooting did he propose that we'd speak on the phone. Javier called me, already as Esteban, as if he were my father, to invite me to lunch. That very lunch is the opening scene. This phone call was a means to set the scene in place: since this father and his daughter have not seen each other for thirteen years, Rodrigo wanted to establish an emotional truth in the scene by putting us in conditions of unknown, of anxiety. It also meant our real reunion: perhaps I was going to find Javier changed and vice versa after eight months without news and therefore give more realism to this scene.

This introductory sequence is particularly intense, both in terms of its duration and the way in which information is gradually given to the audience... tell us more about this scene.

Beyond the reunion with Javier, Rodrigo had set it up specially: not only did we not know where the cameras and microphones were placed, but everything seemed "real" in this restaurant, from the waiters to the other customers to the food. Here again to succeed in giving a feeling of truth amplified by the absence of rehearsal, you had to play on the spot.

In order to prepare, Rodrigo had asked us to write a full biography of our characters. I wrote about Emilia's life from age 2 to 34, her age in the film. I noted all the details related to her relationship with her father, but also those of the years of her life without him. Once he had those two biographies, he passed on to each of us some of the details of that to the other. So I had some information about Javier's character and vice versa. Just as much, there were elements of Esteban that I didn't know, that I had to try to discover in this scene. This method is for Rodrigo a way to create the natural movement of life. But also to fully anchor the film in what is, in my eyes, one of its messages: how each person has their own perception of their life.

***The Beloved* embraces many subjects, a tumultuous father-daughter relationship, the world of cinema, and also a reflection on the times, in particular the evolution of the male-female relationships or toxic relationships.**

For me, this film explores the relationship between a father and his daughter, but above all the way in which the story you make of your own journey through life transforms the experience of living it. That's why it happens in this environment, because

cinema is also a way to transmit stories. But yes, when I saw the film for the first time, I realised how much it is about current male-female relationships. Of how sometimes a man does not know how to express his feelings because society in which he was raised did not go in that direction.

Obviously, this film is permeated by the questions of our time on these subjects. We talked about it a lot with Javier, Rodrigo and Isabel: why don't men and women express their emotions in the same way? There is by the way a sequence in the film that I really like when Marina asks Esteban how he feels about the reunion with his daughter to which he replies that he prefers to keep it to himself.

While Esteban's flaws are at the heart of the film, he remains a dominant man. Do you think he's a narcissist?

Probably a little. And probably especially in his past. However, he is not entirely bad. I'm even sure that he worked on himself, but was overwhelmed by his obsession with his career to the point of not realizing that he had neglected his family. Rather, he is someone who cannot communicate with his daughter; he cannot apologize for the harm he has done to her. And I find that this is indicative of the current masculinity, whether in family relations, friendships or work relations. It touches all levels, even politics. It's also a film about how to relearn how to take care of others, to accept to recognize that we might have hurt them, to know how to ask for forgiveness.

Emilia is not without ambiguities: one may wonder if she does accept the role her father offers her in order to reconnect with him or because it could revitalise her career?

Probably a bit of both. But that's one of the things

I really like about Rodrigo and Isabel's cinema: they want above all to talk about life. However, life is steeped in contradictions. There is never only one reason why you do things. I find that Emilia is both impulsive and also suffers from a lack of self-confidence caused by the deep wound generated by paternal abandonment. As a result, she is a mixture of great sadness and rage. So when her father offers her this role, there is a part of her that refuses to accept it because she does not want to reopen a painful chapter of her life and another that sees the opportunity to find him again, to bring him back into her life, to finally be able to talk to him, to tell him how badly his absence has hurt her. Even if she thinks the wound of paternal abandonment has healed, there will still always be the little girl looking for her father's presence. I think it's a wound that never heals. That's exactly what interested me in this role: to play a woman full of contradictions.

***The Beloved* shows the path of transformation of a man, which has become a societal issue today. Since you had already worked with Rodrigo Sorogoyen, on the series *Riot Police*, already implicitly addressing men-women relations, have you felt an evolution on his part on the subject?**

Of course. If only because there is a six-year gap between *Riot Police* and *The Beloved*, he and Isabel have inevitably changed, matured in their way of writing and filming. All the more so since their main motive is to question with the greatest sincerity human relations. And their strength is that they don't judge their characters. Rodrigo has always told me about Laia, the character in *Riot Police*, and Emilia, that one shouldn't judge their ambitions or their flaws. But above all, I think that Rodrigo has grown to show courage today in his approach to filmmaking. Let's take for example the choice to shoot this first sequence based on an improvisation,



without stopping the cameras for an hour and twenty minutes. I feel in him this desire to go beyond what he already knows. He is not afraid of putting himself in danger by testing things that he is not sure he'll be able to do beforehand. It is very beautiful to see and be a part of.

***The Beloved* is indeed audacious in its mise-en-scene; this opening sequence or that of the filming of the lunch, to the irruptions of black and white, the play on sound or music... Did he talk to you about it beforehand?**

Yes, but without dwelling on it: he did not want this information to worry us or influence our acting. But this form was necessary since it is also a film that talks about how films are made. Changing the format is a way of changing the audience's views and feelings about what they see, how they perceive a narrative. And it's just as much a way for a filmmaker to question himself about how he transmits it. Here too, I see a form of courage: that of following your instincts.

Your career is starting to develop; you have experienced different conditions of filming. Some scenes in *The Beloved* show pretty rough goings on behind the camera. Did you feel it as a way of de-glamorizing this environment? Or as playfulness between truth and falsehood?

The Beloved is not driven by a desire to denounce anything. It is above all a film that expresses the passion for cinema. With love but without artifice. And I'm very proud that it includes the entirety of a film crew. From the clapperboard operator to the make-up artist or the boom operator, all these roles are played by actors but with a heightened sense of precision to show what our jobs are. With this film, Rodrigo and Isabel presented them in a very beautiful way.



He remains inseparable from Isabel Peña, his co-writer...

For me, Isabel is the best Spanish screenwriter of the moment. And more than that, her artistic collaboration with Rodrigo is very strong. They know how to listen and respond to the needs of each other. They know how to be demanding while elevating the work of the other, it was extraordinary to see them work together.

You mentioned earlier the dialogue from a scene between Marina and Esteban. In another, she tells him: "times have changed", he replies «yes, but things are more complicated than one might think». Wouldn't that be a perfect summary of the subject of *The Beloved*, about male-female relationships but also about the world of Cinema?

Totally. And that was an important point of this film for me. At first, I was obsessed with the idea that in the end, Emilia forgives her father nothing. Even though she has been so badly hurt by his behaviour, though she has been angry with him for so many years, making a movie with him wasn't going to fix everything.

It wouldn't have interested me if this film ended on a happy note where they reconciled. As an actress and a woman, I have today the need to say that acts have consequences. I like that *The Beloved* clearly states that, that we see and hear women who say no to a man or that he has no longer the right to act as he does. Here, it's his daughter first, then his producer and even the director of photography who object, and express their disagreement with his

way of managing this shoot. And I think that's a very clever way of telling men that it is no longer normal that they benefit from impunity. This is true in «real» life as well as in the film industry. But things are moving forward: when I started shooting, I felt power relations, hierarchy between actors, directors and producers. We are now falling out of this pattern. It's not yet ideal, we have to work at it still, but I think we are on the right track.

In this sense, *The Beloved* also tells the story of the relationship between a man and a woman of different generations. But to which generation would you like it to talk to the most, the men of Esteban's age, so that they may raise an awareness, or that of the women of today so that they dare to speak out more?

I don't know... But something interesting happened during one screening. On the way out, a group of young women came to talk to me. Some were crying, because they had had a father like Esteban and this story had allowed them to put words to their experiences. Then, I was approached by two other women, in their sixties, who told me that *The Beloved* made them realize that they had chosen men who had been bad fathers. That's when I told myself that this film was going to speak to all generations of women. But a little later a member of the team who had just had a daughter told me that this screening had led him to reflect deeply on his connection with her; that as a man, he wanted to be very attentive to this relationship. All this feedback showed me the universal scope of *The Beloved*, because we all, to one degree or another, have family wounds to heal.

A MILESTONE IN SOROGOYEN'S CAREER

Rodrigo Sorogoyen has garnered critical and commercial success throughout his career. All of his works have received widespread international acclaim, including an Oscar® nomination for Best Short Film for *Mother* and participating at festivals such as San Sebastián and Venice. His previous feature film, *The Beasts (As Bestas)*, premiered in the official section of the Cannes Film Festival, Cannes Première, and won the César Award for Best Foreign Film, the Lumière Award for Best International Film, and the Best Director, Best Actor, and Tokyo Grand Prix awards at the Tokyo International Film Festival, as well as nine Goya Awards, including Best Film, Best Director, and Best Screenplay. In addition, the film was a box office hit in both France and Spain, where it sold over a million tickets.

With *The Beloved (El Ser Querido)*, Sorogoyen felt it was time to aim even higher and reach new goals. This film maintains the same auteur vision and commitment to reaching a wide audience, but on a larger scale, with a top-tier international cast, and with the goal of becoming the project that finally establishes Sorogoyen as a director recognized not only in Europe—where he is already a leading figure—but also throughout the rest of the world.

From that perspective, the film was always intended to be screened in the official competition section at the Cannes Film Festival. Achieving that goal is therefore the desired outcome of the first phase of the film's release. Now it's time to focus on the rest of the journey.

UNIVERSAL CONFLICTS, AN EXCEPTIONAL UNIVERSÉ

The Beloved (El Ser Querido) is based on a premise that any viewer can relate to: the relationship between a father and a daughter, and the open wound left by abandonment. Martínez, an acclaimed film director, was unable—or unwilling—to be there when his daughter Emilia needed him. Now, years later, he tries to use his privileged position to build a bridge and regain not only their relationship, but also her love. Emilia, for her part, bears the indelible mark of having been abandoned: a trait that is not merely anecdotal in her character, but fundamental to who she is and how she relates to the world.

Ultimately, it is this father-daughter relationship conflict with which any viewer—whether or not they have experienced abandonment—can identify. These are the kinds of emotions and bonds everybody can recognize, because we have all loved someone who has let us down, or we have been that person who has let someone down.

In contrast to the universal nature of the conflicts that this picture addresses, the setting in which the film unfolds is novel and unique to most viewers: the world of film industry workers. Specifically, the filming of a movie. For the vast majority of viewers, a film set is a completely unfamiliar environment, with its own rules and hierarchy that acts as a catalyst for everything the father and daughter have been unable to say to each other for years.

On that film set, power dynamics are at play in two distinct ways. Martínez is the director; Emilia, the actress. He holds the creative authority and the power to make decisions. But at the same time, he is the father, and she is the daughter. Each person's goals—regaining a daughter's love, finding out if a father is still the man who caused hurt—are put on the line in an attempt to produce the best work possible, in a context where the power dynamic is already profoundly unbalanced. The film explores this unrelenting tension: the personal and the professional become irreversibly entangled.

Additionally, there is a debate that is increasingly present in contemporary cultural discourse: to what extent can a genius's excesses be tolerated? When do we set limits on someone who works with extraordinary dedication and rigor in pursuit of a great work of art? Does the human being come before art, or does art come before the human being? *The Beloved (El Ser Querido)* does not pose these questions explicitly, but it makes them unavoidable for anyone who sees it.

As usual in the films of Rodrigo Sorogoyen and Isabel Peña, these conflicts are presented with subtle storytelling, always operating within shades of gray, without taking sides for or against any of the characters. The film examines the situation from different perspectives, prompts the viewer to ask the right questions, and leaves it up to them—if they so choose—to answer those questions themselves.

AN INTIMATE STORY, A MAJOR PRODUCTION

At its core, *The Beloved (El Ser Querido)* is an intimate film. It's a film about human emotions, about the intimacy of those emotions—or the brutal absence of them. And yet, from the very first moment of its conception, it was always meant to feel big. It needed to have the weight, the ambition, and the production value of a major piece of work.

This spirit permeated every aspect of the production from the very beginning. Starting with the cast: the decision to cast Javier Bardem in the lead role, with Victoria Luengo as the female lead and an international cast, was above all a commitment to the quality of the performances, but also a statement of intent regarding the kind of film the filmmakers wanted to create. The same was true for production design, filming formats, and the rest of the technical and artistic decisions.

The primary goal of this film was to create a visually powerful film that portrays a relatively simple story, rooted in deep emotions that any viewer can relate to. Scale that serves intimacy, not the other way around.

PRODUCTION DESIGN

One of the first and most critical challenges of the production was finding the desert. The film that Martínez is shooting within the fictional narrative takes place in an arid region near the Sahara's border with Mauritania, requiring a location that would convincingly evoke that setting without resorting to VFX: an isolated, believable set that would work for both exterior and interior shots on a large scale. And, at the same time, a space that could logistically support everything involved in a production of this magnitude: water, electricity, connectivity, and infrastructure.

The solution came after several rounds of location scouting. It was during a photo scouting phase when it was finally confirmed: in order to work, production had to leave the mainland. Fuerteventura offered exactly the dual conditions that Martínez, the director played by Javier Bardem, and therefore Sorogoyen were looking for: a desert landscape of extraordinary aridity and visual beauty, capable of functioning like the Sahara on camera without digital intervention, and at the same time, sufficient logistical infrastructure to support a shoot of this size. Once the island was chosen, the team conducted three location scouting phases to precisely define the filming locations. On the other hand, one of the major challenges of the process was coordinating all the involved administrative bodies— island, local, and national, including the Coastal Authority—to carry out an industrial operation of this scale within a protected natural park.

Once the location was confirmed, the next challenge was building the fort. Transporting all the necessary materials from the mainland and erecting a set of that size in a protected area imposed very specific conditions: working exclusively with temporary structures to ensure that, once the filming was complete, the environment would remain in exactly the same condition as it was previously. This environmental requirement was not an obstacle, but rather another design variable that was integrated into the construction planning from the very beginning.

THE CREW WITHIN THE CREW

One of the most unique challenges posed by the script was the creation of Martínez's fictional film crew. Since a large portion of the film consists of scenes from the shoot, and given that realism is one of the defining characteristics of Sorogoyen's cinema, a real film crew was created within the fictional setting: instead of hiring extras, professional actors and even a few film technicians portrayed each role on Martínez's crew.

To achieve this, a full casting call was held for that fictional crew, and once it was assembled, they followed a "shadowing" training program. Each actor in Martínez's crew was trained in their fictional role by the corresponding real-life crew member on the set of *The Beloved (El Ser Querido)*. For example, actress Malena Villa, who played Martínez's focus puller in the desert, was trained in the weeks leading up to filming directly by the actual focus pullers and camera crew. This was the case for every role. The result is a level of detail and authenticity that is one of the most valuable contributions of this production, and which gives the film a sense of organic flow that is difficult to achieve by other means.

THE USE OF FORMATS

The final major challenge of production design—and one of the most exciting—was how to approach the various recording formats. From the very beginning, Sorogoyen had a clear vision, one that was more visceral than rational: this is a film about cinema, about storytelling, and about the idea that there are as many truths as there are versions of the same event. He wanted to explore that idea through the medium itself. So, he decided to shoot in digital, video, 35mm, 16mm, 8mm, and 65mm—the latter brought in specifically from Germany—and in each of these formats, different emulsions were also used, which greatly enhances the visual richness of the final result.

This decision posed a considerable logistical challenge. On Sorogoyen's shoots, there is a specific need—uncommon in the industry, where cost optimization is the priority—to organize the shooting schedule according to the narrative timeline. Maintaining that approach while managing the arrival and departure of various equipment formats at a location as remote as the Fuerteventura desert added a layer of enormous complexity. To handle this, the filmmakers assembled a large camera crew: several operators, a mini-DV camera rolling continuously and simultaneously, two focus pullers, two camera operators, two assistants, and a loader. A crew that, when shooting with a single camera, might seem large, but which offered the flexibility needed to decide practically on the spot which format we would use to shoot each scene.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Rodrigo Sorogoyen (Director & Co-Writer)
is a Spanish director & writer.

Sorogoyen most recently directed “*The New Years*,” a series which world premiered at the Venice Film Festival. He directed, co-wrote, and produced *The Beasts (As Bestas)*, which received numerous accolades, including Best Foreign Film at the César Awards in France, and Best Film, Best Original Screenplay, and Best Director at the Goya Awards. Sorogoyen’s short film *Mother* was nominated for an Academy Award® in 2019.

Isabel Peña (Writer) is a Spanish screenwriter.

Peña co-created and wrote the series *Riot Police* for Movistar Plus+, winner of the Forqué and Feroz Awards for Best Series, and among more than 20 national awards, several of them in the Best Screenplay category. She collaborates on most of her projects with Sorogoyen, including *The Beasts*, winner of nine Goya Awards, *The Realm*, winner of seven Goya Awards, and *May God Save Us* which won the Silver Shell for Best Screenplay at the San Sebastián International Film Festival.

Nacho Lavilla (Producer)
is a Spanish producer.

Lavilla began working as a coordinator and first assistant director on various TV series including *Drug Squad: Costa del Sol* (Telecinco/Netflix), and films such as *The Realm* and *Mother*, both directed by Sorogoyen. In 2020, he became a partner at Caballo Films and has since produced award winning films such as *The Beasts*, which premiered at Cannes Première and won numerous awards, as well as *The Wailing*, which won Silver Shell for Best Director ex aequo at San Sebastián Film Festival.

Eduardo Villanueva (Producer)
is a Spanish producer.

Villanueva founded the production company Caballo Films alongside four partners in 2011. Among his most notable works is *Mother* (2017), a short film directed by Rodrigo Sorogoyen, which was nominated for an Academy Award and won over 100 awards, including the Goya Award for Best Fiction Short Film. Other acclaimed projects include national and international awards winning *Riot Police*, which Villanueva produced and co-wrote and *The Beasts*, which won the Lumière Award for Best International Co-production, among other awards.

ABOUT THE CAST

Javier Bardem (“Esteban Martínez”) is best known for his Academy Award®-winning performance in the Coen brothers’ *No Country for Old Men* as well as Oscar®-nominated turns in *Being the Ricardos*, *Beautiful* and *Before Night Falls*. His acclaimed body of work also includes starring roles in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona*, *Skyfall*, *Dune* and *The Sea Inside*. He most recently received Emmy® and Golden Globe® nominations for his role in the Netflix limited series *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* and starred in the Academy Award®-nominated Apple film *F1*. Bardem can next be seen in the highly anticipated *Dune: Part Three* from Warner Bros. and the Apple TV+ limited series, *Cape Fear*. He recently wrapped production on Florian Zeller’s *Bunker* from FilmNation opposite Penelope Cruz and will star alongside Kate Hudson in Amazon MGM Studios’ *Hello & Paris*.

Victoria Luengo (“Emilia”) has received numerous accolades for breakout role in the Spanish-language drama thriller series “*Riot Police*,” while her performance in the drama *Cork* earned her a Best Actress nomination at the Goya Awards. She will next appear in Pedro Almodóvar’s *Bitter Christmas*, which will also premiere out of Cannes this year.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a dark jacket and light-colored pants, is shown in profile from the waist up. She is leaning against a light blue door or wall. The background is a vast, arid, desert landscape under a hazy sky. The overall mood is contemplative and somber.

CAST

JAVIER BARDEM	Esteban Martínez
VICTORIA LUENGO	Emilia
MELINA MATTHEWS	Bárbara
MARINA FOÏS	Marina
MALENA VILLA	Malena
MOURAD OUANI	Bilal
PEPA GRACIA	Pepa
RAÚL PRIETO	Raúl
PABLO GÓMEZ PANDO	Pablo
RAÚL ARÉVALO	César
NURIA PRIMS	Charo
LAURA BIRN	Alice

CREW

Directed by RODRIGO SOROGOYEN
Screenplay ISABEL PEÑA, RODRIGO SOROGOYEN
Director of photography ÁLEX DE PABLO
Set design JOSÉ TIRADO
Editing ALBERTO DEL CAMPO
Music OLIVIER ARSON
Sound AITOR BERENGUER
Sound design FABIOLA ORDOYO
Mixing YASMINA P. RAMIREZ
Costumes SAIOA LARA
Make-up IRENE PEDROSA
Hair JESÚS GIL
Assistant Director CURRO GONZÁLEZ-CEBRIÁN
Assistant Production Manager DAVID ALONSO "BARBATE"
Casting ARANTZA VÉLEZ, PAULA CÁMARA
Production Manager BELÉN SÁNCHEZ PEINADO
Produced by NACHO LAVILLA, EDUARDO VILLANUEVA
Associate Producers JORGE PEZZI, GUILLERMO FARRÉ, FRAN ARAÚJO
Co-producers JEAN LABADIE, ALICE LABADIE
Executive Producers NACHO LAVILLA, EDUARDO VILLANUEVA,
CLARA LAGO, JAVIER BARDEM
International Sales GOODFELLAS