

A Cinema Guild release



2017 / 92 minutes / 1.85:1 / DCP / Dolby Digital 5.1
In Spanish and English with Spanish and English subtitles

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Press Materials:

http://www.cinemaguild.com/theatrical/septimodia_press.htm

SYNOPSIS

EN EL SÉPTIMO DÍA (On the Seventh Day) the new fiction feature from director Jim McKay (GIRLS TOWN, OUR SONG, EVERYDAY PEOPLE) follows a group of undocumented immigrants living in Sunset Park, Brooklyn over the course of seven days.

Bicycle delivery guys, construction workers, dishwashers, deli workers and cotton candy vendors, they work long hours six days a week and then savor their day of rest on Sundays on the soccer fields of Sunset Park. José, a bicycle delivery worker, is the team's captain—young, talented, hardworking and responsible. When José's team makes it to the finals, he and his teammates are thrilled. But his boss throws a wrench into the celebration when he tells José he has to work on Sunday, the day of the finals. If he doesn't work on Sunday, his job and his future will be on the line. But if he doesn't stand up for himself and his teammates, his dignity will be crushed.

Shot in the neighborhoods of Sunset Park, Park Slope and Gowanus, EN EL SÉPTIMO DÍA is a humane, sensitive and humorous window into a world rarely seen. The film's impact is made quietly, with restraint and respect for the individual experiences, everyday challenges, and small triumphs of its characters.

CAST & CREW

Fernando Cardona as José
Gilberto Jiménez as Elmer
Abel Perez as Jesús
Genoel Ramírez as Artemio
Alfonso Velazquez as Felix
Alejandro Huitzil as Nacho
Gilberto Arenas as Alfonso
Ricardo Gonzalez as Ricardo
Eduardo Espinoza as Juan
Ernesto Lucero as Baltasar

Written and Directed by Jim McKay

Producers: Alex Bach, Lindsey Cordero, Caroline Kaplan, Jim McKay, Michael Stipe

Executive Producer: John S. Johnson

Co-Producers: Charles Miller, Naomi Spiro

Associate Producers: Karim López, Christopher Gabriel Núñez, J. Xavier Velasco, Toni Wang

With the Assistance of: Post Factory, Buttermilk Channel, Beverly Rogers, Alex and Marco Pirozzi, James Ventura

Director of Photography: Charles Libin

Editor: Karim López

Production Designer: Maite Pérez-Nievas

Casting Director: Jodi Angstreich, CSA

Casting Directors (Sunset Park): Lindsey Cordero, Jim McKay, J. Xavier Velasco

Distribution: Cinema Guild

DIRECTOR'S BIO

JIM MCKAY (Writer/Director/Producer) is a filmmaker and co-founder, along with Michael Stipe, of C-Hundred Film Corp. He has produced and directed a feature-length documentary, *Lighthearted Nation*; a feature-length concert film, R.E.M.'s *Tourfilm*; numerous music videos and an award-winning series of public service announcements called *Direct Effect*. In 1995, McKay co-wrote, directed and co-produced *Girls Town*, which received the Filmmakers Trophy and a Special Jury Prize for Collaboration at the 1996 Sundance Film Festival. The film was released in 1996 in the U.S. by October Films. His second feature as a director was *Our Song* (1999), which premiered at the 2000 Sundance Film Festival, played at New Directors/New Films in 2000, and was distributed theatrically in the U.S. by IFC Films. McKay's third feature, *Everyday People* (2004), was selected as the Opening Night Film of New Directors/New Films 2004 and played at festivals around the U.S. before showing on HBO. His fourth feature, *Angel Rodriguez*, co-written with Hannah Weyer, premiered at the Toronto Film Festival in 2005, had its U.S. premiere at MoMA and showed on HBO in fall 2006. McKay was a co-writer of Nelson George's Golden Globe Award-winning HBO Film *Life Support*, starring Queen Latifah. McKay has directed numerous tv shows, including *The Wire*, *Big Love*, *Treme*, *In Treatment*, *Mr. Robot*, *The Americans*, *The Good Wife*, *Boss*, *Breaking Bad*, *Rectify*, *Power*, *BrainDead* and *Law and Order*. McKay served as a producer on *American Movie* (Chris Smith), *The Sleepy Time Gal* (Christopher Munch), *Spring Forward* (Tom Gilroy), *Stranger Inside* (Cheryl Dunye), *La Boda* and *Escuela* (Hannah Weyer), *Brother to Brother* (Rodney Evans), *Room* and *Fourplay* (Kyle Henry), *Memorial Day* (Josh Fox) and *Mosquita y Mari* (Aurora Guerrero). McKay was a Rockefeller Fellow in 2003 and a Guggenheim Fellow in 2004. In 2005, he was a recipient of the Lincoln Center Martin E. Segal Award.

FESTIVALS

Official Selection – BAMcinemaFest, 2017
Official Selection – Locarno Film Festival, 2017
Official Selection – Vancouver International Film Festival, 2017
Official Selection – Hamptons International Film Festival, 2017
Official Selection – Thessaloniki International Film Festival, 2017
Official Selection – Mar del Plata Film Festival, 2017
Official Selection – Palm Springs International Film Festival, 2018
Official Selection – Miami Film Festival, 2018
Official Selection – Sarasota Film Festival, 2018

INTERVIEW with DIRECTOR JIM MCKAY

Can you talk about the origins of the project?

Often times by the time I complete a film its origins have become blurry and that's the case with *En el Séptimo Día*. I know that after the release of *Our Song*, in October of 2001 I worked on my first outline of the story/script for this project. But it soon got put to the side as I began work on my third film, *Everyday People*.

There was a mixed bag of inspiration for that rough draft of a script - my reading of a book called *Mexican New York* by Robert Smith; Ken Loach's hilarious and heartbreaking film *Raining Stones*; ideas spun from the creation of *Everyday People*, a film that took place almost exclusively in a restaurant; fond and formative memories of my work in a San Francisco restaurant alongside immigrants from the Yucatan; and my experience by proximity with a family of Mexican immigrant migrant workers featured in my wife Hannah Weyer's documentary, *La Boda*. The Mexican New York book centered on a specific community of immigrants from Puebla, Mexico who had settled in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. I had had such a great experience working on *Our Song*, a film that was as much about a neighborhood (Crown Heights) as it was about its characters. And inspired by this book, the idea that though we might live in the melting pot of New York City, we are often territorial, rarely venturing into or getting to know surrounding neighborhoods a stone's throw away, came into focus once again.

Everyday People was followed quickly by my fourth film, *Angel Rodriguez*, and once that was finished, in 2005, I returned to the script, which had a working title of *The Big Game*. Shortly thereafter, I got hijacked by a decade of work in episodic television and it wasn't until 2015 that I pulled the project back out of the files and decided to make it happen.

Can you discuss how your casting process worked, and expand on your decision to cast non-actors?

After spending ten years directing a massive array of extremely talented, trained, and efficient professionals on tv shows, I was excited to dive into something completely different. I love working with non-actors (and watching them become actors!) and tonally/stylistically, it made sense to work with non-professionals on this film. The film is about Mexican immigrants and I was determined to make it with Mexican immigrants. Furthermore, because of the inspiration of Robert Smith's book, the characters I had written were from Puebla and so our casting process had to be even more specific. It's not like we wouldn't cast someone who was from another region of Mexico, but we tried to keep our cast looking and feeling like they belonged together. And even though we did some casting in East Harlem and Jackson Heights, we based out of Sunset Park and in the end, most of our main cast came from there.

How did the casting process go?

We started out in May of 2015 with traditional open calls in Sunset Park for which we wallpapered the neighborhood with flyers, handed them out on the street, and had it announced on the radio. Our sessions helped us to hone in on what we were looking for and we quickly switched to a process of walking around and identifying people who had the right look or vibe and pulling them aside to talk about the project while videotaping, providing us with a mini, on the spot "audition". This was a productive way to do things and by December, nine months later, we had chosen our main cast.

There was a full, finished script when we cast and everyone who came in was auditioned for the role of José at first, which gave us a base on which to consider them. Then as we got to know the guys who were coming back and impressing us, we started to match them up with characters. Elmer needed to be someone with humor and guile; Jesus someone with strength and cockiness; Baltasar someone wise and experienced, etc. While each actor certainly put some of themselves into the characters, very little was rewritten based on who

they were. It annoys me when people assume that first-time actors in realist dramas are just "playing themselves." Like any actors, they use themselves, but I give all our actors credit for fully inhabiting characters that weren't always necessarily innate. If anything, I think the guys grew and/or changed personally based on their experiences playing these characters.

How long did it take you to shoot the film?

The casting had begun in the summer of 2015 with the hopes of shooting the film that Fall, but the casting process took longer than expected and I also wanted more time to properly prepare the film, to get to know the actors and for them to get to know each other. So we spent the winter of 2016 (a warm one, thankfully) having fútbol practices in Sunset Park and Red Hook. We usually got together one weeknight a week and every Sunday afternoon.

Throughout the whole process, I think most of the guys were in the dark about exactly what was going on. They knew I had directed movies, but they knew nothing about the process and really moved forward on blind faith (and a growing curiosity and camaraderie) throughout the year. First it was coming back time and time again for callbacks. Reading scenes (a first, for them) as different characters, learning about acting each time. And then once everyone was cast, none of them had read the entire script yet (they had just been told the general plot) and they weren't even all assigned to characters yet. With some of them, I wanted to wait and watch them as a group - I knew they had the talent and ambition to do the film, but I was still getting to know who they were and trying to figure out which character they were right for. So then the fútbol practices began and again, they kept showing up. And they'd ask, "When are we making the movie?" And I'd say, "Summer. Maybe May, maybe June. Soon."

Pre-production started in April/May of 2016 and we brought everyone together in a Park Slope church basement for a read-through of the script. This was the first time the actors had the full script and got to hear it out loud, after months of coming in and auditioning single scenes. It was a great night and you could watch the whole thing come together and the whole weird project become real in the minds of all these people who had taken a jump of faith for almost a full year now. The jokes got laughs, the suspense felt suspenseful.... The movie was real. We filmed for 19 days in June and July and then did a few days of pickup shots/scenes. It took until October for us to get a day that was rainy enough for us to do the shots of José making deliveries in the rain.

How did the experience of making this film differ from your previous film work?

My first two films, *Girls Town* and *Our Song*, were made on the same scale as *En el Séptimo Día* and I knew that I knew how to make this kind of film, but I underestimated how challenging it would be to work with this big of a cast, with locations as upscale as our restaurant and as difficult to negotiate as the Sunset Park soccer field. As usual on a film like this, a crazily dedicated group of producers and crew helped make it happen. It was harrowing and joyous. And the lunches, usually tostadas made by the wife of a local fútbol coach (who also played the role of Alfredo) were amazing.

Did your previous TV experience help in making this film, or introduce challenges?

Coming off ten years of working in television was both an advantage and a challenge. Sheer experience has made me more confident as a director. And becoming a better craftsman has made me more proficient. But there was also a danger of not being able to break habits picked up in the fast-moving, ultra-efficient world of episodics. On episodics, you get your work done thanks to the massive numbers and skills of an ultra-experienced professional crew, whereas on a small film, you have a fifth of the crew with much less, sometimes no experience and you are counting on their passion and dedication to the project - which, thankfully, we had - to bring the film together.