

Foundation for the Promotion of Salvadorian Cinema

presents

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DVR CINEWORKS & DIGITAL 1

production

surviving GUAZAPA

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ROBERTO DAVILA ALEGRIA

film

Running time: 113 min. | Aspect Ratio: 1:1.75 | Audio: Spanish

When at war, getting out alive is the best option.

The civil war years were very difficult in El Salvador. Battles, bombs, and shootouts were daily events. Even from San Salvador could be heard the bombs dropped by the army over the Guazapa volcano, 30 kilometers north, on what was a strategic bastion of the rebels for twelve years.

Guazapa was the scenario for multiple bombings and military raids, in a repeated attempt by the army to retake the territory.

Many stories arose in those mountains. Stories of heroism and betrayal, stories of abuse and valor, stories of injustice and brotherhood, told after the war by its survivors.

Those stories inspired this movie, whose unbiased approach allows new generations to share the feelings of the then fighting brothers.

Surviving Guazapa, an important contribution to the historic memory of El Salvador, in some way will help with the healing of wounds of people still learning to coexist.

The are many stories of this war still to be told, which from different perspectives should be divulged by new producers in order to save for posterity an important chapter in the history of our country.

Roberto Dávila Alegría

Synopsis

Guazapa volcano, El Salvador, 1986.

A Guerrilla formation, lead by Felipe (Geovanny Alvarado), executes the mission of installing landmines on the pathways the army uses at raids.

Unnoticed surrounded by an enemy patrol while on their mission, the formation is forced to disband and retreat during an intense exchange of fire.

Pablo (Arturo Rivera) is wounded during his retreat, and takes shelter until the danger is past.

After leaving his shelter, he finds the lifeless body of his brother. His loss makes him decide to leave the fight behind and go in search of his mother.

After departing he comes across Julio (Alejandro Lopez), a soldier lost in the vastness of the volcano. As they fought hand to hand, their fight was interrupted by a bombing of the area. Forced to take shelter together, their rivalry continues.

Due to the circumstances but still distrustful, they decide to join together in order to leave Guazapa alive, putting their lives in jeopardy for this alliance.

After surmounting some tasks, a lost little girl crosses their path, so they decide to take her back to her family. The path that takes them out of the mountains also takes them to dangerous encounters with fighters from both sides, facing repeatedly life-or-death situations.

After being surprised and captured by Chamba (Nilson Urbina), a guerrilla fighter ex-comrade of Pablo, their luck seems to have ran out. The situation turns critic by the close proximity of an army platoon.

Surviving Guazapa from the production

The desire to make a movie about the civil war in El Salvador was born in the late 90's, but it wasn't until 2004 that the circumstances were convenient enough to develop the project.

The process began with interviewing former participants from both sides of the conflict. A large amount of information was gathered.

After many months and many rough drafts, the script began to show an interesting structure. The next step was to raise the money. After convincing local investors to take a chance on a Salvadorian movie project, gathering the actor's team became the new challenge.

The casting took place in theater schools and acting groups, where some members of the cast were chosen, yet the leading roles were still vacant. An open call for casting was announced through local newspapers, achieving a great number of candidates. Thus, the cast was completed.

In order to achieve realism, especially in the combat scenes, it was crucial to obtain the cooperation of the armed forces. After numerous issues, the military assistance was in the form of tactical advice, real explosions and original weapons captured during the war.

In the weeks previous to the filming, all the participants were given basic training, given by ex-combatants from both sides of the conflict.

All was ready and scheduled to begin filming on September 2005, but the unexpected arrival of hurricanes Stan, Wilma and Katrina, the beginning of the production was delayed until the following year.

Filming began early January 2006, with much enthusiasm and a great teamwork feeling amongst the cast and crew.

Staring February some electronic equipment began malfunctioning, problems that gradually spread to all the electronic equipment on site.

With several weeks of delays in shooting due to the repeated and inexplicable problem, it was decided to change location as a possible solution.

The cause became apparent some weeks later. Near the location, an area known as Planes de Renderos, a government's important telecommunications central station, which controls all the radio frequencies of the country, seem to tamper with the sensitivity of this type of equipment.

At the new site, far from the previous, the technical problems completely disappeared. However, due to the numerous delays, the rainy season came by. June had the most precipitation that year, interrupting shooting countless times.

During July, beside the interruptions caused by the rain, there were a couple of accidents.

While filming the scene on the cliffs of Puerta del Diablo, the protagonists lost their balance and fell. Luckily the shot was done with a blue screen just 3 meters bellow them. The accident only caused some scratches and bruises.

The other accident occurred when the barrel of a rifle strongly struck the mouth of the soldier, leaving him unconscious for awhile and breaking him a tooth. A visit to the dentist corrected the damage.

As a result of the rain and the proliferation of mosquitoes, there were two cases of dengue fever during August. The director and one of the protagonists fell ill, delaying the production for several weeks.

Despite the adversity the shooting was completed in September, with a total of nine months. At that time began the postproduction, process which was to take a further twelve months.

The task of editing, special effects, sound effects and background music were not easy, but the skill and dedication of the experts had as a result a film at the level of standard international cinematography.

After more than three years from its beginning, and at a cost several times over the initial budget, the movie finally made its world debut in El Salvador, January 2008.

Surviving Guazapa is the first Salvadorian-made feature-length fiction movie about the civil war. Over 130 persons participated in its creation, all of them nationals, a fact that states a precedent to the benefit of the cinematographic arts, by showing the technical and artistic ability existing in El Salvador.

About the Filmmakers

ROBERTO DAVILA ALEGRIA - Director, co-writer, co-producer

Determined to realize his project, Roberto joins *FUNDACINE* (Foundation for the Promotion of Salvadorian Cinema) in 1999, where he receives assistance and the necessary induction to make reality his much awaited film, eight years later.

FILMOGRAPHY

- Producer / Actor of the short film:
 "EL HOMBRE DE UNA SOLA MUJER" (2001)
 "THE ONE WOMAN MAN"
- Director / Writer of the short film:
 "EN EL BUS" (2003).
 "ON THE BUS"
- Director / Producer / Writer of the short film:
 "TU AUSENCIA ME MATA" (2004).
 "YOUR ABSENCE KILLS ME"
 Awarded Best Script at the Certamen de Video 2006, CONCULTURA.
- Director / Producer / Writer of the short film:
 "EL ULTIMO DÍA" (2004).
 "THE LAST DAY"

MARIELOS DAVILA - Co-producer, co-writer

Marielos works with Roberto in the development of their ideas until transformed into scripts. The task of Co-producer comes natural. Her unconditional commitment to the project has taken her to achieve the unachievable to make it possible.

GUILLELO CASTILLO – Director of photography

With over two decades of experience in video production, Guillelo joined the project committed to achieve a superb quality in photography.

Although it's his first participation in filmmaking, his valuable ability is clearly evident in each scene of the film.

CARLOS VELASCO - Co-producer

Also in video production, Carlos joins the project first as an Associate Producer, soon extending his role to Executive Producer.

Leading Actors

ARTURO RIVERA – Pablo (Guerrilla fighter)

Arturo was pre-selected due to his part in the TV special "Christmas Pages from Santa Claus", where he made evident his versatility for his portrayal. During the film, his character faces very dramatic situations, scenes wealthy achieved by Arturo.

ALEJANDRO LOPEZ – Julio (Soldier)

Without previous acting experience, Alejandro was absolutely outstanding in his performance. The role appeared to have been written just for him. His personality and the one of his character were one and the same. "I can't believe It's me in the film" – says Alejandro as he sees himself on the big screen. "Truth is I didn't feel I was acting, I was just being myself"- he adds.

KAREN GOMEZ – Ana (Little girl)

Karen, a six-year-old, was selected amongst many girls of the same age. It appeared she had some previous drama experience, for she was able to change her happy demeanor to one of pain and sorrow with ease. Even do she didn't have such ease once in front of cameras and reflectors, she still managed in the end. "Maybe I'll make more movies...if I get invited"- says Karen smiling.

NILSON URBINA - Chamba (Tough guerrilla fighter)

His part in the movie at first was as an extra for the combat scene with the army, but his notable presence earned him consideration for the role of antagonist, at which he excelled. "I have always wanted to participate in a project like this. It has been a dream come true."- says Nick.

Cast

Arturo Rivera Pablo
Alejandro López Julio
Karen Gómez Ana
Nilson Urbina Chamba

Geovanny Misael Alvarado
Brenda Carolina Flores
Carlos Cruz Rodríguez
Robert Josué Alegría
Salvador Mauricio Bermúdez
Edgar Adán Portillo
Luís Antonio Alas
Felipe
Radista
Posta
Guerrillero 1
Guerrillero 2
Guerrillero 3
Soldado perdido

Production Team

Director : Roberto Dávila Alegría

Writers : Marielos de Dávila, Roberto Dávila Producers : Marielos de Dávila, Roberto Dávila Executive Producers : Guillelo Castillo, Carlos Velasco

Director of Photography : Guillelo Castillo

Sound Designer : Marcos Antonio Menjívar

Sound Production : Eternal Studio Music : Adrián Guardado

Editing : Carlos Campos, Roberto Dávila

Special Effects Supervisor : Ernesto López

Overview

Tittle : Surviving Guazapa

Genre : Adventure, Drama

Country : El Salvador

Release year : 2008

Language : Spanish

Runtime : 113 minutes

Sound : Digital surround

Aspect Ratio : 16:9

Director : Roberto Dávila Alegría

Writers : Marielos de Dávila & Roberto Dávila.

Director of Photography : Guillelo Castillo

Production companies : DVR Cineworks/DIGITAL1/ FUNDACINE

Cast

: Arturo Rivera, Alejandro López, niña Karen Gómez, Nilson Urbina, Geovanny Alvarado, Luís Alas.

Synopsis

During El Salvador's civil war, two men from opposite sides struggle together to save their lives while trapped under heavy bombing in the Guazapa volcano.

When a lost little girl crosses their path, they decide to take her back to her family facing many dangers on their way.