

GAEL GARCÍA BERNAL

LUIS GNECCO

MERCEDES MORÁN

quinzaine  
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT  
CANNES 2016

a film by pablo larraín

# NERUDA



# SYNOPSIS

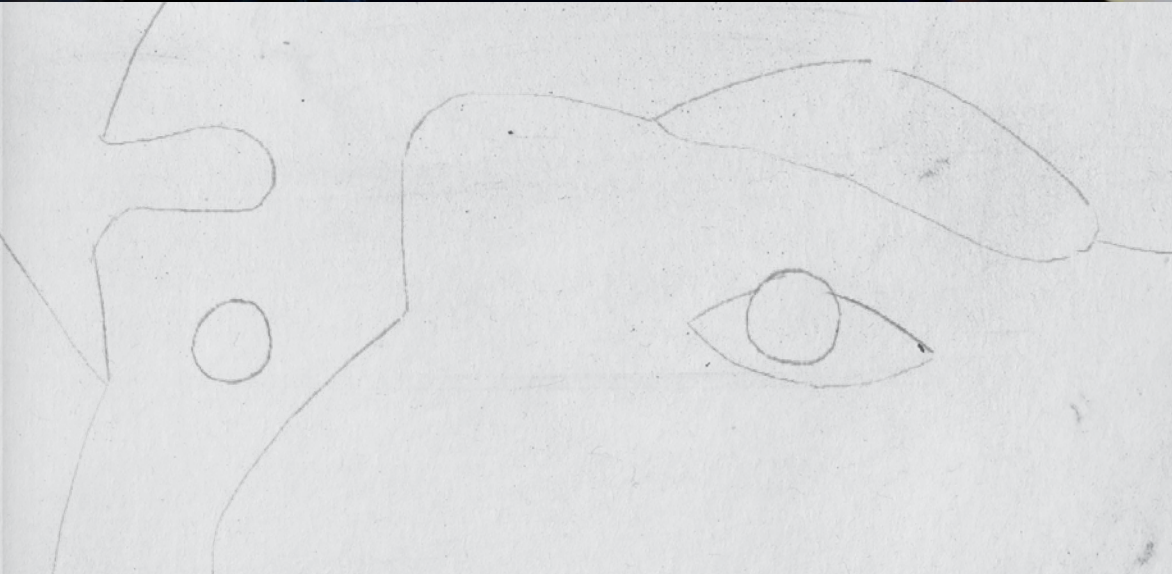
It's 1948 and the Cold War has reached Chile. In congress, Senator Pablo Neruda (Luis Gnecco) accuses the government of betraying the Communist Party and is swiftly impeached by President Gonzalez Videla (Alfredo Castro). Police Prefect Oscar Peluchonneau (Gael García Bernal) is assigned to arrest the poet.

Neruda tries to flee the country with his wife, the painter Delia del Carril (Mercedes Morán), but they are forced into hiding. Inspired by the dramatic events of his new life as a fugitive, Neruda writes his epic collection of poems, "Canto General". Meanwhile, in Europe, the legend of the poet hounded by the policeman grows, and artists led by Pablo Picasso clamor for Neruda's freedom.

Neruda, however, sees this struggle with his nemesis Peluchonneau as an opportunity to reinvent himself.

He plays with the inspector, leaving clues designed to make their game of cat-and-mouse more dangerous, more intimate. In this story of a persecuted poet and his implacable adversary, Neruda recognizes his own heroic possibilities: a chance to become both a symbol for liberty and a literary legend.











# INTERVIEW WITH Pablo Larraín







## Why Neruda?

We see and feel Pablo Neruda as a creator who is so complex and extensive, practically infinite, that it's impossible to put him into a single category, to make a single film purporting to establish or define his personality or his work in a hard and fast way.

That's why we chose the story of the escape, the investigation and the literary legend. For us, *Neruda* is a false biopic. It's a biopic that isn't really a biopic because we don't really take the task of making a portrait of the poet that seriously. Simply because that's impossible. So we decided to put together a film from elements of invention and playfulness. In that manner, the audience can soar alongside him in his poetry, his memory, and his Cold War communist ideology.

## How does Neruda, as an artist, experience the events of 1940s Chile, and how do you approach that aspect?

During his escape, Neruda wrote a good part of “Canto General” which is perhaps his most massive, complete and risky book, inspired as it was by everything he saw and everything he went through during his escape. The writing is full of fury and flights of fancy, full of terrible dreams and full of a cosmic description of Latin America in crisis - angry and desperate.

Neruda constructed a political tome about war, rage and poetry while on the run, which opened the door for us to a wildly imaginary investigation, because – like the poet and his work – the film constructs an intersection between art and politics from a cinematic and literary point of view.





## Why did you choose Neruda's escape?

Neruda liked crime stories – that's why the film turns out to be a road movie with a police investigation element – genres which involve changes and evolving characters and, in our case, elements of farce and the absurd as well. We see the landscape and all the movement within it as a transformative and illuminating process. No one winds up as he began – neither the hunter nor the prey.

We invented a world, just as Neruda invented his. The film we made is more a "Nerudian" film than it is a film about Neruda, or perhaps it's both.

We created a novel that we would have liked Neruda to read.









# INTERVIEW WITH Luis Gnecco

## **What does it mean for you to play a character as famous as Neruda?**

To talk about what it meant to me to approach Neruda, I think it's interesting to first think about playing an actual person.

Playing someone feels to me more like toeing a specific line, one that's already been drawn, than about taking up the challenge of drawing that line from scratch, and that's what happened here. Acting involves bringing together all the materials with which that line gets drawn and then being available to defend that line as well as modify it, in order to establish a dialogue.

This is the process, always dangerous, in which an actor lives and what he feeds off. From that point of view, saying that one is "playing Neruda" feels wrong to me.





That thought process came out of my initial anguish as I began sketching out this journey. The very idea of getting a handle on the vast life of this giant, whose existence might well be the epitome of the great artist in his era, really threw me into a sort of stupor and confusion – from which I emerged a little trembling slightly after having scratched the surface, barely scratched the surface – more just isn't possible – of one part of his sprawling life's work.

Always a paradox, as sensitive as a person can be, sensual, hedonistic, and at the same time politically committed and active. Brilliant and determined from childhood, weak at times, even superficial. Categorical, valiant, adventurous and elegant. Always shining, blessed by the light of genius and inspired by the muse of passion which, if it really existed would, -in his case be blind and stubborn.

The meaning of having attempted to find my own path through such a sprawling and exuberant biography is as simple as saying yes to the director, of saying yes I would agree to do it, even knowing that by simply taking up this challenge, I was also saying yes to the possibility of subsequent satisfactions.

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## **What was Pablo Larraín's contribution to creating the role of Neruda during the shoot?**

Pablo Larraín is one of the directors and artists who understands and is really familiar with how his actors dive into a script and approach a story, even knowing or guessing where they're going to dive underwater and where they will emerge.

His constant generosity consists of inviting you from a very empathic place to join him on this adventure. That place is empathic because it springs from his own intimate exposure.

So every day when you show up on the set you're paired with a tireless worker who invites you to weave a fabric with the materials you have brought, and then you weave and re-weave, until you have a fabric where the loops are not those you were expecting and not where you had chosen to put them.

As I said before, my initial anguish about approaching Neruda and to come up with a rough proposal for the director (assuming this is even possible in this case) was washed away by the generous admission he made to me that he didn't have a set plan either for this woven cloth and all he needed was my determination to weave and my confidence in the fact that even if the work got woven and unwoven a thousand times, there had to be two of us involved in the process from the first loop to the last.







## How was it to work with Mercedes Morán and Gael García Bernal?

Working with Gael is always a refreshing experience. His versatility makes him an invaluable actor. And on this project he managed to slip seamlessly into the screenplay's game – where his character comes alive from the poet's words as he tries to construct his eternity. What neither Neruda nor the screenplay anticipated is that the creation comes alive on the borders of the ridiculous and the desperate. Only an actor of his confidence and talent could take on such a subtle and audacious game with so much poise. An actor who enjoys his craft and who is available and always surprising. An intelligent actor with a keen and constant emotional ear. It will always be a pleasure for me to find myself on the set with him, again and again. The Neruda that I portray here is in many ways determined by the Delia (*La Hormiga*, "the ant") that Mercedes Morán has constructed.

A magnificent actress, who works in silence, with enormous concentration. An actress with surprising resources, who manages to negotiate imperceptible subtleties, like no one I've ever seen.

Her portrait of the aristocratic Argentine painter, who in large part made the poet who he was, is both true and moving. Day after day, sharing the set with her was a masterclass, a lesson in reliability and temperance in front of the camera.

To sum it up, I don't know if this trajectory of holding fast, casting off and looping around that I have chosen is the right one, but I know it has been so much richer thanks to the presence of that hardworking, great *hormiga* known as Mercedes Morán.









# INTERVIEW WITH Gael García Bernal

**This is the second time you've worked with Pablo Larraín. What was this new experience like? How did you get involved in *Neruda*?**

The first time was like being parachuted into a very well-formed movie family. Starting with the curiosity and instinct of Pablo Larraín, they all made me feel part of a creative group that needed an “outsider” to jam with them on *No*. This time, with *Neruda*, the family – still cinematic, orgiastic, swarming, and highly professional – came together to make this new carnival inspired by Neruda’s works. I only speak of his work, because in the life of a poet of such dimensions, the works are his life’s creation. We navigate upon that strange and human ocean. Pablo Larraín is a director who knows most of us really well, and I must add, this is a really likeable and supremely talented group. So often, he watched us take incredible risks on the set and, sometimes, getting totally fed up in the editing rooms. For that reason, and because of the friendships we all formed on and off the set, he came to measure our potential. Thanks to our director’s sensitivity and daring, we were able to really delve into this film of epic proportions – trans-Andean, with snowy fields and persecutions – focused on the subtlest and most sublime aspect, the poetry. Without a doubt, there are very few directors with the courage and the talent to dive under the deep snowfall of creation. We always expect it to be cold inside. Pablo Larraín always seems to come up with another dimension of what appeared so impenetrable.

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**How did you approach this character, the tracker who melds with his prey, who needs his prey as his prey needs him?**

Every time out, I'm more certain that when a question is interesting, dangerous and keen, the body is the first to respond. It's from the body – or through characterization, to put it in more professional terms – that Peluchonneau took shape. The desire to be a “great policeman” though he's a bastard, the film noir character with no past and no future, the policeman who can sleep standing up, the character who is always dressed the same, that character with one eye half closed and who doesn't observe the conventions of “Hello, how are you?” and customary answers. Together with Pablo Larraín we discussed the character extensively and you could say that this body took on its soul at the moment we decided that the character would be the son of a prostitute. The pariah, or the exile returns, to make a name or identity for himself by measuring himself against a creator of living moments like Neruda.

What does a policeman do in order to hate a poet? He's fascinated by him. The archetype of the post-war conservative, specifically one who has accepted defeat with profound resentment, with all his insecurities on the surface, was key to finding Peluchonneau's imaginative spark.

**How does this film fit with current cinematic trends?**

It seems to me there are very few films like this one right now. I'm not referring to making a freestyle biopic inspired by the work of the





author-subject. I'm speaking more specifically about the controversial theme that this film addresses – the poetic word. Cinema is a fantastic place for emotion and for its intellectual and narrative consequences. It doesn't depend on the word in order to be what it wants to be. However, this film's starting point is the word, the dangerous word that makes you fall in love and which creates new worlds. The characters are caught up in that whirlwind during the action of the film. They suffer because they can't break free of the constraints of poetic creation. And obviously the poet is the one who reads that language, who can bring it back to earth, by making it at once myth and truth. I can't think of another film like that out there right now, especially not one that manages to navigate those waters and still be as entertaining as *Neruda*.





# EL MERCURIO

## PABLO MERUDA: DESAFORADO Y HUYENDO DE LA JUSTICIA



EL RAZO DE MERUDA WILLIAM DE PERITO EN UNO DE SUS MOMENTOS EN MONTAÑA  
Y EN EL MOMENTO EN EL QUE SE ENCONTRA EN LA CARCEL POR LA POLICIA



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# INTERVIEW WITH Mercedes Morán

## **What does Delia see in Pablo Neruda?**

In Pablo, Delia sees the love of her life. She feels unconditional love for him, an unconditionality that is almost maternal. Besides, being a skilled artista herself, she can appreciate the poet's talent. She works as his assistant, his right hand, participating in the editing of his work with authority: she feels that she is practically a co-author of the "Canto General". And she relegates herself to accompany him as a woman and fellow militant.

## **How do Delia's ideas influence Neruda's political role?**

Delia's ideas influence Pablo greatly, as she is the one who somehow convinces him to join the Communist Party. This is her ideology, which she ties to the international intelligentsia, whom she had direct links with.





In Spain, Delia takes Pablo by the hand and connects him with her personal friends Garcia Lorca and Picasso, and officiates as an intermediary with these artists during the troubled years of the Revolution. She becomes Neruda's best cover letter before the European intellectual elite.

### **What is most important for Neruda: Delia, his political career, his poetry?**

Neruda, aware of his posterity, privileged the building of his career over any other thing. He loved Delia, but not more than himself. His selfish side revealed itself in their relationship, and the extreme comprehension that Delia professed to him in spite of his permanent love affairs ended up dissatisfying him even more. When he decides to put an end to his relationship with Delia, she is devastated. She is impoverished both spiritually and materially, since her entire fortune, which was as large as her love, had been put towards Pablo, his career, and the Party.





# Director's BIOGRAPHY



**Pablo Larraín** was born in Santiago, Chile, in 1976. He is a founding partner of *Fabula*, a production company dedicated to film, television, advertising and production services.

In 2005, he directed his first feature-length film, *Fuga*. He then directed *Tony Manero*, 2007, which premiered at the Directors' Fortnight of the 2008 Cannes Film Festival. *Post Mortem* is his third feature-length film. It premiered in Official Competition at the Venice Film Festival in September of 2010.

In 2010, he directed *Prófugos*, HBO's first ever series produced in Chile.





The following year, Pablo Larraín directed the film *No*, which premiered at the Directors' Fortnight of the 2012 Cannes Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. The second season of HBO's *Prófugos* was aired in September 2013.

*The Club* premiered in Official Competition at the 2015 Berlin International Film Festival where it was awarded the Grand Jury Prize Silver Bear. The film was also a Nominee at the Golden Globes for Best Foreign Language Film. *Neruda* is his sixth feature film. In 2016, Pablo Larraín also directed his first English speaking feature, *Jackie*, starring Natalie Portman.





# Cast

Luis Gnecco  
Gael García Bernal  
Mercedes Morán  
Diego Muñoz  
Pablo Derqui  
Michael Silva  
Jaime Vadell  
Alfredo Castro  
Marcelo Alonso  
Francisco Reyes  
Alejandro Goic  
Emilio Gutiérrez Caba

**Pablo Neruda**  
**Oscar Peluchonneau**  
**Delia del Carril**  
**Martínez**  
**Víctor Pey**  
**Álvaro Jara**  
**Jorge Alessandri**  
**Gabriel González Videla**  
**Pedro Domínguez**  
**Bianchi**  
**Jorge Bellet**  
**Pablo Picasso**



# Production CREDITS

<b>Director</b>	Pablo Larraín
<b>Producer</b>	Juan de Dios Larraín
<b>Screenplay</b>	Guillermo Calderón
<b>Director of photography</b>	Sergio Armstrong, ACC
<b>Editor</b>	Hervé Schneid, ACE
<b>Production designer</b>	Estefanía Larraín
<b>Costume designer</b>	Muriel Parra
<b>Music</b>	Federico Jusid
<b>Line producer</b>	Eduardo Castro C.
<b>Sound designer</b>	Miguel Hormazábal
<b>Sound supervisor</b>	Rubén Piputto
<b>Post production</b>	Cristián Echeverría, Frédéric J. Lozet

*Producers*

# FRANCE

Peter Danner  
Renan Artukmaç

# ARGENTINA

Alex Zito  
Juan Pablo García  
Ignacio Rey  
Gastón Rothschild

# ESPAÑA

Fernanda del Nido

*Executive producers*

# U.S.A.

Jeff Skoll  
Jonathan King

# FRANCE

Marc Simoncini

# CHILE

Mariane Hartard  
Rocío Jadue

*Coproducers*

# ARGENTINA

Axel Kushevatsky  
Cristián Cardoner  
Javier Beltramino



Year **2016**  
Length **108 min**  
Language **Spanish, French**  
Country **Chile**  
**Argentina**  
**France**  
**Spain**  
Production companies **Fabula**  
**AZ Films**  
**Funny Balloons**  
**Setembro Cine**  
in association with **Participant Media**  
in coproduction with **Telefé**  
**Reborn Production**  
with the participation of **RTVE**  
**Movistar +**  
**Elipsis Capital**  
with the support of **Fondo Audiovisual**  
**Corfo**  
**CNC**  
**Ministère des Affaires Étrangères**  
**et du développement international**  
**Institut Français**  
**INCAA**  
**ICAA**  
with financing from **Instituto de Crédito Oficial**  
Film format **Digital**  
Film ratio **2.39:1**  
Sound **5.1**  
Exhibition format **DCP**





# Screening DATES

## **Friday, May 13th**

08:45 am at Théâtre Croisette  
(Press & Public screening)

## **Friday, May 13th**

17:00 at Théâtre Croisette  
(Official screening)

## **Saturday, May 14th**

10:00 am at Olympia 2  
(Market screening)

## **Saturday, May 14th**

18:30 at Studio 13  
(Public screening, French subtitled only)

## **Saturday, May 14th**

22:30 at Cinéma Les Arcades 1  
(Public screening, French subtitled only)

## **Monday, May 16th**

10:00 am at Olympia 8  
(Market screening)

## **Monday, May 16th**

16:00 at Cinéma Alexandre III  
(Public screening, French subtitled only)

# Contact Information

## WORLD SALES

### **FUNNY BALLOONS**

#### **Peter Danner**

pdanner@funny-balloons.com

M +33 6 74 49 33 40

#### **Renan Artukmac**

rartukmac@funny-balloons.com

M +33 6 85 73 87 02

### ***PR Coordinator & Festivals***

#### **Emmanuelle Zinggeler**

ezinggeler@hotmail.com

festivals@funny-balloons.com

M +33 6 07 84 66 06

### ***Cannes Office***

*From May 10th to 20th*

17 Square Mérimée – 2nd Floor

06400 Cannes (in front of the Palais)

### ***Paris Office***

4bis rue Saint Sauveur

75002 Paris – France

Tel +33 1 40 13 05 86

Fax +33 1 42 33 34 99

contact@funny-balloons.com

www.funny-balloons.com

## US SALES

### **CAA**

llewis@caa.com

tristen.tuckfield@caa.com



## PRESS IN CANNES

### International press

#### **PREMIER**

##### ***Cannes Office***

2, boulevard d'Alsace, 4th Floor,  
06400 Cannes  
Tel +33 4 93 68 01 67  
[www.premiercomms.com](http://www.premiercomms.com)

##### **Contact**

##### **Liz Miller / Sanam Jehanfard**

[liz.miller@premiercomms.com](mailto:liz.miller@premiercomms.com)  
[sanam.jehanfard@premiercomms.com](mailto:sanam.jehanfard@premiercomms.com)

### US press

##### **Steven Raphael** - Required Viewing

office: 212 206-0118  
mobile: 917 287- 1679  
[sterapha@aol.com](mailto:sterapha@aol.com)  
[denise@requiredviewing.net](mailto:denise@requiredviewing.net)

### Spanish press

#### **ELLAS COMUNICACIÓN**

##### **Elio Seguí**

Mobile: +34 636.608.541  
[Elio@ellascomunicacion.com](mailto:Elio@ellascomunicacion.com)

##### **Deborah Palomo**

Mobile: +34 639.635.510  
[deborah@ellascomunicacion.com](mailto:deborah@ellascomunicacion.com)

### French press

##### **Magali Montet**

M + 336 71 63 36 16  
[Magali@magalimontet.com](mailto:Magali@magalimontet.com)

##### **Florence Debarbat**

M+336 75 28 99 95`  
[Florence@magalimontet.com](mailto:Florence@magalimontet.com)

### French distributor

#### **WILD BUNCH DISTRIBUTION**

65 rue de Dunkerque, 75009 Paris  
Tel+ 01 43 13 21 15  
[distribution@wildbunch.eu](mailto:distribution@wildbunch.eu)  
[www.wildbunch-distribution.com](http://www.wildbunch-distribution.com)  
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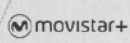


Reborn

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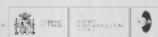
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