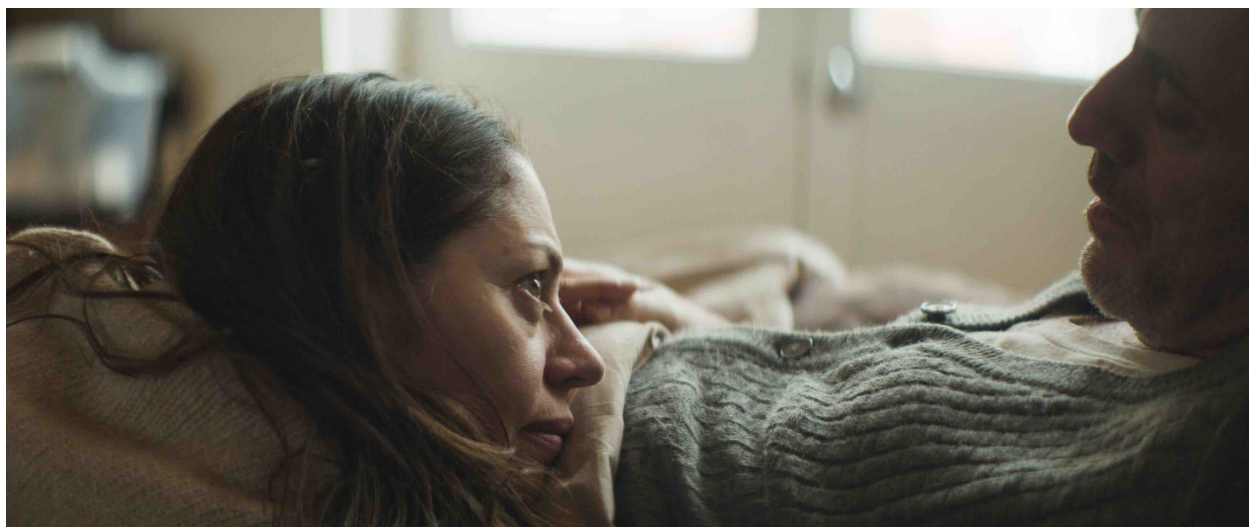


MUSIC
BOX
FILMS

presents

A MONSTER WITH A THOUSAND HEADS

A film by Rodrigo Plá



75 min | Mexico | 2015 | Not Rated | 1:2.40
In Spanish with English subtitles

Official Website: <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/monster>
Press Materials: <http://www.musicboxfilms.com/monster-press>

New York/National Press Contacts:

Sophie Gluck: sophie@gluckpr.com | 212-595-2432
Aimee Morris: aimee@gluckpr.com | 212-595-2432

Music Box Films Contacts

Marketing & Publicity
Theatrical Booking
Exhibition Materials

Yasmine Garcia | ygarcia@musicboxfilms.com | 312-508-5362
Brian Andreotti | bandreotte@musicboxfilms.com | 312-508-5361
Lindsey Jacobs | ljacobs@musicboxfilms.com | 312-508-5365

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

Official Selection – Venice International Film Festival

Official Selection – AFI Film Festival

Official Selection – Miami International Film Festival

Official Selection – BFI London Film Festival

SYNOPSIS

When Sonia receives the news that her husband's cancer has progressed to a terminal stage, she races to secure the insurance company approval for the care that can help him. Met with indifference and negligence at every turn, Sonia's desperation triggers a primal survival instinct as a series of increasingly violent confrontations unfold. A sharp, urgent tale of a distraught woman intent on protecting her family at all costs, Rodrigo Plá's latest film is an engrossing combination of thriller, drama and timely socio-political commentary.

LOGLINE

When the insurance company refuses to provide care for Sonia's terminally-ill husband, an increasingly violent series of confrontations unfold in this urgent tale of a distraught woman, an engrossing combination of thriller and socio-political commentary.

Interview with the Filmmakers

Rodrigo Plá, director

Laura Santullo, scriptwriter and author of the original novel

The filmmakers answered all questions together; separate answers are indicated by initials.

***A Monster with a Thousand Heads* marks your return to a more genre-driven film, like your first film (*La Zona*), but still keeps the strong social undertone of your filmography. Why did you decide to tell this story in this mode?**

Broadly speaking, I guess *A Monster* could be considered a thriller, in which case, our return to the genre was more coincidental than intentional. During the writing process, we don't generally set out to produce a screenplay in a specific genre. We don't decide which genre rules we're going to respect. We simply don't have that conversation. The process has a lot more to do with the story to be told, with what happens and who it happens to. Maybe that's precisely the reason the film essentially revolves around the characters' emotions as opposed to an explosion of actions. True, there is a scam, a gun and cops, but when we're writing, shooting or directing, we try to place the emphasis on the characters' experiences.

How did the story emerge?

L.S. It's hard to pinpoint the exact moment an idea comes to you. Usually when we come up with a story it's the sum of many things: feelings, books, films, conversations, etc. Something begins to take shape. In the case of *A Monster*, although we always intended to make a film, I wrote it as a novel first. Basically this was because, although I had the plot clear in my head, the characters' motives and the structure eluded me. Putting it down on paper in narrative form helped me organize that world. The theme is linked to the concerns, to the situations we all have to deal with as citizens. If I had to mention a catalyst, I would say the Canadian documentary *The Corporation*, which is about corporate monsters that clearly aren't governed by a code of ethics and lack morality. It wasn't immediate, but the idea lingered and in time, I started hunting down my own monster.

The storytelling is rather fragmented and allows for glimpses into the stories that surround the central plot. What were your intentions there?

By telling the story from multiple viewpoints, we were aiming to add layers of complexity to the central conflict. We felt that if we approached it solely through the eyes of the protagonist, the film would merely be stating an opinion and we would be closing the door on the possibility of an ethical conflict, whereas this multiplicity of viewpoints distances us somewhat from Sonia Bonet's vicissitudes and emotions and offers more variables when it comes to interpreting her actions. Also, we like to think that what we are, who each of us is, is related to how other people see us. Other people define us, too, as subjects. That's where we got the idea of playing with mirrors that at once reflect and deform our view of the protagonist from subjective standpoints. This allows room for empathy, but also fear and rejection, depending on the experience of each character that crosses this woman's path in her frenzied pursuit.

Jana Raluy, who plays the mother offers a great performance, both fragile and stubborn. Why did you choose her? Can you tell us a bit more about the casting (especially Sebastián Aguirre who plays her son Dario and was recently seen in *Güeros*)?

R.P. The casting process was a lengthy one and while I have people who can do the odd casting without me being there, as a director I enjoy and feel it's important to be part of the

process. I need to meet the people who will be interpreting our story and work with them, even if it's just for a short time, so I can get some insight into how they think, if they have imagination, if they'll respond to my directions, etc. This phase generally turns out to be a mini lab of sorts, where the scenes are first put together, the dialogues tested and the actors improvise, which is why it's so important to me.

Jana Raluy is a theater actress. We saw her by chance some years back and recalled her unique energy on stage. When we set out to look for the film's mother and son, we called her in for a casting and there was no question she was the right person for the part. She has the uncanny ability to play a very broad range of emotions. Sebastián Aguirre was recommended to me by my assistant director and his casting left us in no doubt either. Sebastián has a wonderful naturalness. The rest of the cast, which is very large, is made up of a combination of well-established actors and lesser-known ones, but there can be no denying they all did a great job.

The soundtrack seems equally fragmentary, like the images - it is sometimes muffled, sometimes very direct. Was this part of your initial idea or did it develop during the shoot/production process?

The soundtrack was also intended to raise the question of subjectivity. There are the voices that hover over the action, but that, strictly speaking, aren't voices off camera. Rather, they recount a situation that will arise later on in terms of the film's action, but that we decided to make happen in the same timeframe. This decision was linked to the possibility of creating contradictions between what actually happened and how the characters remember it; between what the characters actually did and what their heads tell them to say when asked to take the witness stand. But aside from these voices—there's only a handful of them throughout the film—the soundtrack, like the visuals, aims to express this subjectivity on screen. What does narrating from memory imply? How can we show we're watching through the eyes of another character? Over and beyond the outcome, that was intention.

For a film with ultimately extremely serious topics - love, illness, death, responsibility - *A Monster with a Thousand Heads* has a very dry sense of humor and quite some use of dramatic irony. Is this the only sane response to the absurd conditions of modern life? Why did you choose this tone rather than something more immediately dramatic?

The topics you mention are serious and at the same time, they're not. You could say they form part of everyone's baggage. That's why we make a conscious effort to depict situations impartially. Even during the lowest points in life, the absurd and the ridiculous come along to make us laugh. Real life is rarely one color, so if we've done our job, the film should resemble life a little, irony and all.

CAST AND CREW BIOGRAPHIES

Rodrigo Plá, Director

Rodrigo Plá was born in 1968 born in Uruguay and was raised in Mexico. He studied film at the Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica (CCC) in Mexico City. He is the director, producer and screenwriter of several films. Some of his most prominent short films are *Novia mía* (1995), *El ojo en la nuca* (2000) for which he received the Student Academy Award for Best Foreign Short Film (USA, 2001), and *30-30* (2010), a segment of the feature-length omnibus *Revolución*.

His first feature-length film was *La Zona* (*The Zone*, 2007) which received a number of awards around the world, including the Leone del Futuro – Premio Venezia Award Opera Prima “Luigi De Laurentiis” at the 64 Mostra Internazionale D’Arte Cinematografica di Venezia (Italy, 2007) and the FIPRESCI prize at the Toronto International Film Festival (Canada, 2007). His second film *Desierto Adentro* (2008) was the closing film of Cannes’ Critic’s Week (France, 2008) and won numerous awards including the Mayahuel Award for Best Film at the Guadalajara Film Festival (Mexico, 2008) and 8 Ariel Awards. *La Demora* (*The Delay*, 2012) his third film premiered in Berlin (Germany, 2012) where it won the Ecumenical Jury Prize.

Filmography

2007 The Zone
2008 Desierto Adentro
2012 The Delay
2015 A Monster with a Thousand Heads

Jana Raluy (Sonia)

Born in Mexico City, Jana studied at the Center for Arts Education of Televisa. In 1997 she began her career in theater, and for 12 years participated in different ensembles at the OCESA Theatre in Mexico City. Jana has participated in numerous television series produced for both Mexican and International audiences, garnering awards for her portrayals.

Her first starring film role was in Rodrigo Plá’s *A Monster With A Thousand Heads*. The film opened the 2015 Orizzonti section of the Venice Film Festival, and her work has received international praise. She won the award for Best Actress at the Morelia Film Festival, the Hermosillo Film Festival, and La Habana Film Festival. Jana is currently shooting a feature film and a television series in Mexico City.

CREDITS

CAST

Sonia Bonet	Jana Raluy
Darío	Sebastián Aguirre Boëda
Dr. Villalba	Hugo Albores
Lilia	Nora Huerta
Nicolás Pietro	Daniel Giménez Cacho
Sandoval	Emilio Echeverría
Notary	Ilya Cazés
Night Guard	Noé Hernández
Lorena Morgan	Verónica Falcón

CREW

Directed by	RODRIGO PLÁ
Original story and screenplay	LAURA SANTULLO
Produced by	SANDINO SARAVIA VINAY and RODRIGO PLÁ
Co-producers	MATTHIAS EHRENBERG, RICARDO KLEINBAUM, LUIS DIAZ
Associate producers	LAURA SANTULLO, YAMANDÚ RODRÍGUEZ
Cinematography	ODEI ZABALETA
Art direction	BÁRBARA ENRÍQUEZ, ALEJANDRO GARCÍA
Costumes	MALENA DE LA RIVA
Sound	AXEL MUÑOZ
Sound design	ALEJANDRO DE ICAZA
Music	JACOBO LIEBERMAN, LEONARDO HEIBLUM
Editor	MIGUEL SCHVERDFINGER

About Music Box Films

Founded in 2007, Music Box Films is a leading North American distributor of acclaimed international, American independent and documentary features along with the best in international television. Recent releases include **MERU** by Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin, winner of the 2015 Sundance Audience Award for US Documentary that went on to become one of the top documentary box office performers of 2015.

Upcoming releases include Alexander Sokurov's **FRANCOFONIA**, the story of the Louvre under Nazi Occupation and **NORMAN LEAR: Just Another Version of You**, the latest documentary from Loki Films (*Jesus Camp, Detropia*) and a 2016 Sundance Film Festival premiere. Music Box Films is independently owned and operated by the Southport Music Box Corporation, which also owns and operates The Music Box Theatre, Chicago's premiere venue for independent and foreign films.