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DEVOTED TO THE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FILM AS AN ART FORM · DE

## Cinemateca 2010

# Sin Nombre (Without Name) 2009

August 27 - September 2, 2010

### Film Notes

SIN NOMBRE is a visually and emotionally powerful cinematic view of the harsh realities facing the thousands of nameless migrants from Latin America who head for the United States across the Mexican border every year.

U.S. critics have suggested that it is not the 'familiar' story of migrants and their journey itself that makes this a great film. Instead, they praise director Cary Fukunaga's undeniable skill at telling such a story with haunting and vibrant images as well as suspenseful pacing. Indeed, this son of Japanese and Swedish immigrants uses a documentary-style realism to transport the audience onto the roof of the speeding cargo train crowded with the poor workers, shards of separated families and lost youth who are the subject of the film.

The director's decision to narrate the film entirely in Spanish, with English subtitles, enhances the audience's chances to inch, if ever so slightly, toward the uncanny mixture of untold risks and unmitigated hopes that make up the migration experience.

But for those who want to look below the surface, there is more to this film than meets the eye. Fukunaga's knowledge of both the development model fiascos of colonial and post-independence Latin America, as well as the unintended consequences of militarized borders, suggests that the story is not as sufficiently 'familiar' to the American public as critics may suspect.

The thriller is told through the interwoven lives of three tragic and very young characters who, against all odds, are seeking to realize their aspirations for a better life, a minimum measure of dignity and some semblance of family.

The most destructive path is taken by Caspar, and his 12-year old recruit, Smiley, who join the brutal Mara Salvatrucha Brotherhood gang in their native state of Chiapas, Mexico, near the Guatemalan border. Caspar finds himself violating gang

rules when attempting to maintain a loving relationship with a young girl who is not part of the gang life.

Back in Honduras is Sayra, a young woman about to start her trek north on foot, along with her uncle, making the journey at the invitation of her widowed father. The latter has just been deported back to Honduras after years of working in New Jersey and is eager to get back to his second wife and children. They cross the Mexican border near Tapachula, Chiapas, where they eventually hop on a freight train bound for the U.S.-Mexico border. Caspar and other members of the Mara gang get on the roof of the same train and the story evolves from there.

Ironically, with SIN NOMBRE set to be one of the two films that open our Cinemateca 2010 series, we are receiving news of the horrible massacre, near the border with Brownsville, TX, of some 72 Latin American migrants, mostly from El Salvador, Honduras, Ecuador and Brazil. The suspected killers are members of another brutal gang, the Zetas. Sadly, the line separating dramatic fiction from real life in the violent border environment is often blurred.

SIN NOMBRE, and the discussion following the film on Tuesday night, August 31, provide us with a unique opportunity to ponder the humanitarian crises that surround human mobility in the era of globalization and migration.

—Lourdes Gouveia (OLLAS)

### Film Information

**Directed by**  
Cary Fukunaga

**Language**  
Spanish

**Country**  
Mexico/USA

**Running Time**  
96 minutes

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