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Prize 2024  
TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



FESTA  
DEL CINEMA  
DI ROMA 2024  
PREMIO MONICA VITTI  
MIGLIOR ATTRICE



17 PREMIS GAUDÍ  
Acadèmia del  
Cinema Català

# THEY WILL BE DUST

A FILM BY CARLOS MARQUES MARCET

LASTOR MEDIA

KINO PRODUZIONI

ALINA FILM

elastica





GENRE Drama musical

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Spain, Italy, Switzerland

PRODUCTION YEAR 2024

LENGTH 106 minutes

ASPECT RATIO AND SOUND FORMAT 1:85 | 5.1

LANGUAGE Spanish, English

PRODUCED BY

Tono Folguera, Ariadna Dot, Giovanni Pompili, Eugenia Mumenthaler, David Epiney

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

Lastor Media (Spain), Kino Produzioni (Italy), Alina Film (Switzerland)

WORLD SALES

Latido Films



## CAST

|                          |         |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Ángela Molina as         | Claudia |
| Alfredo Castro as        | Flavio  |
| Mònica Almirall Batet as | Violeta |
| Patricia Bargalló as     | Lea     |
| Alván Prado as           | Manuel  |

## CREW

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| Director                | Carlos Marques-Marcet                                       |
| Screenwriter            | Carlos Marques-Marcet<br>Clara Roquet, Coral Cruz           |
| Director of photography | Gabriel Sandru  |
| Editor                  | Chiara Dainese  |
| Art director            | Laia Ateca  |
| Costume designer        | Pau Aulí  |
| Composer                | Maria Arnal   |
| Coreographer            | Marcos Morau, La Veronal                                    |
| Sound                   | Xavier Lavorel, Maya Baur,<br>Kathleen Moser, Denis Séchaud |







## SINOPSIS

After being diagnosed with a terminal illness, Claudia decides to make her final journey in Switzerland. Flavio, who hasn't left her side for over forty years, decides to accompany her on this one-way trip.



# INTERVIEWING

## CARLOS MARQUES-MARCET, the director

### ***Where did the idea for a film about assisted suicide come from?***

Ever since I was young, I've thought a lot about death. It's an obsession I've had my whole life, although over time I've learned to live with it in an increasingly casual manner. It got to the point where I felt the need to work on a project that dealt with the topic. Right when I was in that process, some friends told me their story: they were an old couple who were part of an assisted suicide association in Switzerland, and their plan was to die together. The idea impacted me so much that I decided to hold an acting workshop on transforming the story into a scene. That was the seed for the film. From the material that came out of the workshop, we developed the plot and characters through improvisation, games and readings. However, for personal and health reasons, the couple couldn't participate in the film, so we decided to continue with professional actors and retell their story as a fictional one.

### ***Was the moment it became a fiction also the moment it became a musical?***

Actually, the music was there from the beginning, even in the workshop. In the particularly complicated or difficult scenes, we realised that music seemed to come out quite naturally, whether it was through listening to it or dancing to it. As we delved further into the world of assisted suicide, we found that music was also key feature of many documentaries on the subject. On a broader scope, the iconography surrounding death was also present, and not only in Western cultures. The music made it possible to channel emotions that are difficult to express with words. It wasn't just an accompaniment, but rather a key narrative element that gave depth to the story.

### ***It's a stark contrast when you're dealing with an issue like assisted suicide.***

It is, although I feel the film doesn't solely deal with terminal illness or assisted suicide. Instead, it's how we deal with affection and our expectations when faced with the void that is death. How do we prepare ourselves for death? We didn't want the music to be incidental, but to form part of the narrative itself. Music allowed us to explore areas that wouldn't have been possible to take on with dialogue alone. It wasn't about just making the film lighter in tone, but quite the opposite: the music allowed us to explore the complexities of the topic in more detail. I know it's an unlikely combination, but I don't see it as an exercise in provocation, but more of a way of approaching death in the most sincere and profound way possible.

### ***In recent years we've seen auteur musicals that deal with difficult themes, from Leos Carax's *Annette* to Jacques Audiard's *Emilia Pérez*. Why is this?***

I think we're living in such a radical moment of change that a certain distrust of what we considered to be real has been created. This has led filmmakers to opt for film genres like musicals or horrors as a way of exploring that supposed reality in a more profound way. I don't see it as a form of escapism, but rather a way of reimagining the world from a perspective that goes beyond conventional realism.

### ***How did you tackle the theme of illness in the film?***

We did a lot of prior research into terminal illnesses, but we didn't want to have the story exclusively focus on the how the body deteriorates. Instead, terminal illnesses are a constant threat, a sword of Damocles for the protagonists that forces them to take important decisions before it's too late. We wanted to explore the existential and emotional sides of illness, not just focusing on the physical. The film deals with how we want to live, how we share our decisions with our loved ones and how we accompany each other in the process leading up to death.

### ***How did the collaboration with María Arnal come about?***

I'd been in contact with María since *The Days to Come* and I was keen to collaborate with her. We wanted to create something that sounded contemporary, yet without being modern in the conventional sense. We wanted the music to evoke something atemporal and ancestral. In the end, we opted to reduce the musical elements to voice and percussion, in our search of something simple yet powerful. The idea was to play with the human voice and drums, elements that characterise the most basic aspects of humanity: rhythm and breath. Even if we limited ourselves to a certain minimalism melodically speaking, we wanted the music to be comical, solemn, fearful or bright depending on the scene.

### ***And the collaboration with La Veronal dance company?***

I became interested in contemporary dance some time ago. Seeing La Veronal live was a transformative experience. I wanted to capture the essence of their director Marcos Morau's choreography on screen. We rehearsed the musical numbers for 12 days and filmed them in only two. María Arnal and Marcos Morau's collaboration was essential as they'd already worked together, and the addition of Pablo Maestres, who had already directed many music videos and helped me to find an appropriate visual reference for the dance numbers.

### ***The lead couple unites two actors from very different backgrounds and trajectories, Ángela Molina and Alfredo Castro. Why did they work so well together?***

Ángela Molina was an obvious choice. Her character was practically written for her: subconsciously, there was something about her that fitted her presence perfectly. We needed someone with the solidity and warmth that she always brings, but also someone with that wonderful craziness that characterises her performance. For her husband, I wanted a more earthy actor to balance out the fantasy in Ángela's character. I thought of going with a Latin American, because I've met similar couples in Barcelona. When Alfredo Castro came up as an option, everything fitted. He brought that mixture of air and fire that we were looking for. On top of that, he has experience as a theatre director, so he fit in perfectly with the dynamic creativity between the two characters.



### ***How did you choose the settings, in Barcelona and Switzerland?***

In Barcelona, I wanted to work in the area I grew up in. I'd shot many of my shorts there and I wanted to go back to my roots. The beach also had a special significance for me, especially in winter, which is when I find it most appealing. It's a version of Barcelona which, while being present, isn't always depicted in cinema. I wanted to show a more common, run-of-the-mill, and less idealised side to the city. When it came to Switzerland, it was a logistical challenge. We shot the mountain scenes in the Dolomites, in Italy and we tried to replicate the Swiss landscapes there. It was also extremely important to shoot at the house where Dignitas is based; the centre for end-of-life assistance. It was an intense experience because it wasn't an easy location to shoot at, but Dignitas helped and supported us. We wanted to capture the peace and tranquillity of the facility and be faithful to the real process people go through there.

### ***Several films have been made and books have been written on the topic. Did you have any particular inspiration?***

The first that comes to mind is the Swiss documentary Dignitas – Death of Prescription, which talks about the Swiss organisation. What really influenced me though was the fact that filmmakers don't directly deal with the issue. I kept going back to Ingmar Bergam, particularly Cries and Whispers. Even though there wasn't a direct connection to my film, his work aesthetic and its emotional setting had a profound influence on my process. I also revisited Stanley Donen's musicals and melodramas by Vincente Minnelli and Douglas Sirk.

### ***How has your filmmaking evolved since your beginnings? You seem to have tackled the various stages of your life: falling in love, couples and their conflicts, the challenges of pregnancy and parenthood, and now maturity and death.***

Yes, I think there's an element of that, although I don't plan it that way so consciously. I wouldn't like that my films resonate with more than just one age group. For example, various age groups are represented in They Will Be Dust. For me, filmmaking is learning process, a constant exploration of new territories. I like to challenge myself and not take the easy way, although it always depends on the material. I let myself be guided by what interests or perturbs me. If something makes me feel uncomfortable, I often feel the need to investigate it and dig deeper.

### ***In terms of style, your films always feature disruptive elements, from the use of videocalls in 10,000 km to the home videos in The Days to Come. In this film, the musical sequences also break the classic narrative style. Why do you choose these challenges?***

The way I see it, cinema isn't just about telling a story, it's creating images and sounds that produce a rhythm and movement. It's a way of touching things we couldn't otherwise reach. Although my films may seem very spoken, I'm more interested in what's happening between the words, in how the images can communicate something more profound. I'm always exploring how to reach those unreachable places through cinema.

### ***You've worked in television exclusively since The Days to Come. Has that influenced your filmmaking style in any way?***

Working in television has been very useful. It allows you to shoot more often, which is essential to keep learning and trying things. There's more freedom in television in certain aspects, and that has allowed me to be more playful and explore ideas that I've then transferred to filmmaking. I've also been in very close contact with theatre. Particularly with Pablo Messiez, who I had the pleasure of working with, or with companies such as La Tristura. That point of contact with the theatre has had a huge influence on me, especially in the way of working with actors and in searching for new narrative structures.





## CARLOS MARQUES-MARCET, the director

Carlos Marques-Marcet (Barcelona, 1983) left for Los Angeles on a scholarship for his MFA in Film Directing at UCLA. He started his career as an editor until *10.000KM*, his directing debut. After its premiere at SXSW, where it won the Special Jury Award, the film was nominated at the EFA Discovery Awards and won the Goya Award for Best New Director. He followed this up with *Anchor&Hope* (SXSW, Rotterdam, BFI London) and *The Days to Come*, which premiered in Official Competition at Rotterdam. Outside of film, Marques-Marcet has directed several shows for Spanish platforms such as HBO, Movistar+ and A3Media.



## LASTOR MEDIA, the production company

Lastor Media is a film production company based in Barcelona, founded in 2008 with the mission of being a catalyst for quality projects, both fictional and non-fictional, with artistic or distinctive added value and of interest to the public. At Lastor, we are committed to offering audiences contemporary perspectives, topical themes, character-driven stories, surprising points of view and nuanced characters, far from stereotypical representations, with a unique vision and ambition at both national and international levels.

Among the talents we work with, we stand out: Elena Martín Gimeno (*Creatura*, Quinzaine des Cinéastes, Cannes Film Festival; *Júlia ist*); Carla Simón (*Alcarràs*, winner of the Golden Bear at the Berlinale 2022); Clara Roquet (*Libertad*, Semaine de la Critique, Cannes Film Festival; *El adiós*, TIFF, EFA nominee); Mounia Akl (*Costa Brava, Lebanon*, Orizzonti Extra, Venice Film Festival); Mikel Gurrea (*Suro*, Official Selection, San Sebastian Film Festival); Carlos Marques-Marcet (*Polvo serán*, in post-production; *Els dies que vindran*, IFFR; *Tierra firme*, BFI; *10.000 KM*, SXSW, EFA nominee); Patricia Font (*El maestro que prometió el mar*, SEMINICI); Lucía Aleñar (*Forastera*, in post-production, Cannes Cinéfondation Residency 2021); Irene Moray (*Piel de foca*, in development, Torino FilmLab Residency 2022), and Claudia Cedó (*De sucre*, short film in post-production; developing her first feature film *Mare de sucre*).







## CONTACT

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