QUINZAINE
DIRECTORS' FORTNIGHT
CANNES 2026

LA PERRA

A film by Dominga Sotomayor



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Synopsis

On a remote, wind-lashed island off the Chilean coast, Silvia earns her living harvesting seaweed and shares a quiet life with her partner. When she adopts a stray puppy, Yuri, her days fill with joy, love, and a tenderness that stirs a long-suppressed longing for motherhood. But Yuri's sudden disappearance reawakens a haunting childhood trauma, forcing Silvia to confront a past she has never truly left behind.



In conversation with Dominga Sotomayor

1- The film is a loose adaptation of the acclaimed novel by Colombian writer Pilar Quintana. What made you want to adapt it and situate it in Chile?

Lately, I've been very interested in adaptations. I don't really believe in the idea of simply bringing a novel to the screen; I see it as adopting, transforming, and finding something new within that rich existing material. I felt a strong, intuitive connection to the story without yet knowing where it would take me. The protagonist's relationship with the landscape, and the mysterious bond between the protagonist and the dog really moved me in the novel. At the same time, I couldn't imagine filming it in the Colombian jungle where it was originally set.

From the very beginning, I had a conviction that I had to find a new setting, not in Colombia but in Chile, and in envisioning a landscape that was perhaps more rugged, with cliffs, wind, and an ocean, that would completely change the character of the story as it headed south along the continent.

Inés Bortagaray who was working on the adaptation with me, Nicolás San Martín (one of the producers), and I took a trip through southern Chile, visiting various cold, desolate beaches, and one night on YouTube we stumbled upon a video of an island that was yet a few hours further south. We took a ferry and arrived at Santa María Island, and that marked a turning point in the project. I was captivated by the place; it's a very strange landscape, with a very unique atmosphere. It was also a kind of prison island, very isolated, with a mysterious air about it.

I've always been fascinated by remote islands. I couldn't believe I'd never heard of this island and, as it seemed, almost no one in Chile knew about it either. I've also always been interested in the world of seaweed, and the typical women's work on the island was harvesting seaweed. And so by chance, everything led us there.

I liked the title *LA PERRA* and wanted to keep it. Even though the film was set many miles away from Colombia now, there was a deep effort to preserve the essence of Pilar Quintana's book. Besides, after all the long titles of my previous films, I liked the shortness of this one. It's a simple title, but it still has a certain complexity. On the one hand, it refers to the dog, but it can also be a description of Silvia, the female lead. I thought it best not to translate it into English, because in English "The Bitch" is more clearly a value judgment directed at a woman. I like that it's called La Perra because I believe that Yuri's character is the center of the film, around whom Silvia revolves and transforms.

When I told Pilar Quintana the film would be going ahead, she said, “I’m going to really like it when they stop saying ‘Pilar Quintana’s bitch’ and start saying ‘Dominga Sotomayor’s bitch.’ It was about time to pass that title on to someone else…”

2 - Can you tell us about the process of adapting the script, in what worked and what was changed - and why?

We were particularly interested in bringing out the most vivid elements from the book, those related to Silvia’s relationship with the dog and a traumatic event from the past. All of this with the landscape as the central protagonist. The novel has other episodes and time periods that we omitted. For example, the book recounts the protagonist’s failed attempt to get pregnant; we preferred to omit that and let motherhood be a more underlying theme. More than “translating” the novel into film, we wanted to capture its atmosphere, its rhythm, and see how that could evolve into a film. We worked with the visible and the unsaid, with bodies, with timing and silence, and also with the landscape. Sometimes stepping away from a text is necessary to be more faithful to it in a deeper sense.

3 - Your film TOO LATE TO DIE YOUNG also featured a missing dog. In this film we have a dog found and lost and found again. Is there something about this particular relationship with ‘man’s best friend’ that speaks to you?

I find dogs—and animals in general—really interesting to film because they’re unpredictable. I think the whole tradition of movies that attribute human qualities to animals is amazing. I wanted to try to forget all that, to try to observe a dog for what it is—not for what we want it to be or for the role it plays. I liked the idea of giving the dog a character of her own, one that wasn’t a symbol for a human. Yuri isn’t there to understand Silvia; rather, she’s the other character who wanders through the story and to whom things happen. Almost as if Yuri is an ‘instigator’.

In my films, I’ve been very interested in that feeling or illusion of ownership we create with places, people, or animals.

In my first feature film, “From Thursday to Sunday,” after that long road trip to northern Chile and observing that family so closely, one wonders what sense it makes for them to own that patch of sand in the middle of the desert. In “Too Late to Die Young”, I wanted to play with that idea of ownership of a dog. There’s a female dog that runs away and is given a new name in her new home. The dog is the only one in that film who can break free and who has social mobility.

Domestication is a very delicate and interesting topic. The bond with a dog is mysterious; you think you’re in control, but at the same time, it’s an animal with an incomprehensible nature. It’s as familiar as it is alien, and that’s what draws me to it.

And for La Perra - I have to admit that I'm happy to not fully understand what the film is about. I think I'll discover it as I talk about it with other people. It's not a film that can be explained so clearly. I think that's what I liked about the book, too.

The starting point is a woman who adopts a puppy, and that sets off a chain of events. The film openly explores those episodes and situations. On the one hand, she never became a mother, and that comes through in how she raises the dog. Whether or not to be a mother is a question for Silvia; it's something she lives with and that weighs on her. On the other hand, the loss of the dog reawakens a childhood trauma for Silvia.

The film doesn't set out to tackle a particular theme, but rather seeks to capture the essence of life, to observe the complexity of relationships, and to follow the ups and downs of this woman and her dog on the island that brings them together. and holds them both. By the sheer force of the terrain and understanding the woman's solitude: in mourning a motherhood that never came to be, she tries to domesticate what cannot be domesticated.

4 - Although the protagonist of this film is an adult, it touches on childhood and the experiences that shape us, or imprint us, for a lifetime. How did you want the two time periods in LA PERRA to interact, in terms of how we understand Silvia?

I try to make films that are thoughtful and understated, focusing on characters who are navigating liminal transitional phases and moving toward revelations that come when and where they least expect them.

I had never used a flashback in a film before. This film is different in that regard. We envisioned an episodic structure. I didn't want the past to feel merely like a narrative flashback, but rather like another independent chapter. The idea was to jump in time to accompany Silvia through that trauma which now defines her in the present.

I'm very interested in working with children, so when I read the book, I knew that the episode describing the world Silvia had inhabited in the past on that island had to be in the film. I wanted it to be there not so much as a foundation that explains Silvia and her circumstances in the present from a psychological point of view, but as a freer, more open notion of a broad life—Silvia's life in relation to an essentially dramatic landscape, made of water and also of fire, and founded on a loss that foreshadows, throughout life, other losses.

5 - It's also not the first time you have portrayed a community isolated in some way from the wider world. Where is this film set and how would you describe this place, this island?

I wanted to invent an island that doesn't exist. We shot half the film on Santa María Island and filled in the rest of the setting with locations on the mainland.

That was a major source of inspiration for me on this project—imagining an island, constructing it. It's a purely fictional film open to the world we encountered and transformed.

I think of places as systems of observation. Almost all my films are set in spatial capsules. "From Thursday to Sunday" takes place entirely in a car, "Too Late to Die Young" in an isolated community at the foot of the mountain range, and "La Perra" on an island. It's something that naturally draws me in; perhaps it's a way of shrinking the world so I can look at it.

On our research trips, we kept encountering seaweed; it became clear that this underwater world of the seaweed was in a way, our own Jungle (which mirrored the book's Colombian Jungle). For the film, the world of seaweed and its harvesting was that dark, permeable territory where humans merged with nature.

landscape is never mere backdrop; it functions as a horizontal system, a force equal to the characters themselves. The dramatic terrain becomes a protagonist , austere, indifferent, uncontrollable, that mirrors and amplifies the woman's internal struggle. Through the bond between Silvia and Yuri, I observe how love can turn into hostility, care can slip into obsession, and the need to nurture can become imprisonment when confronting loss, trauma, and the impossibility of repair.

The familiar becomes the most threatening. My films, always far from cities, which puts human scale in perspective, makes us question our sense of ownership over people, animals, and places, and reveals the fragility of the systems that hold us up. On the island, time repeats itself, grief stagnates, and Silvia's relationships, with Mario and this animal who both comforts and torments her, are shaped by what she cannot articulate. «La Perra» is ultimately a portrait of a woman cornered by memory and longing, struggling to reclaim her emotional life before it consumes her.

6 - What was the casting process for the film? How is important that some of the characters in the film are foreigners or outsiders? What did you want to bring out in particular in the fantastic performance of Manuela Oyarzún?

I always had Manuela Oyarzún in mind. She's a great theater and film actress in Chile. We held a small casting call with her and a few others. My mom is an actress too and has helped me with casting for all my films; her name is Francisca Castillo. She directed the casting process. We always work this way—discussing and thinking things through, watching plays, etc.—and then we call in just a few people.

We only held auditions for two children who were the ones who were finally selected. We invited them to my office one day, talked, played games, I filmed them, and they were chosen. Especially with children, I prefer to scout them before holding auditions. Everything is done as small-scale and as un-industrial as possible. Rafaela, the girl, lives on the beach where I live and is a surfer.

I first saw her in a video and thought she was perfect for the character; then I met her and we got along very well. We thought it was key that she lived on the beach and was used to the sea so she would feel comfortable on the island. Dante, the boy, is the son of one of my childhood friends. The kids became friends the day they met, and we thought they would work well together.

For me, it was very important to have something break the island's routine, to create a sense of strangeness in that isolated world, which is why we always thought of bringing in 'foreigners' I spoke with Rodrigo Teixeira, and the idea of Selton Melo came up—he had previously worked with RT Features on *I'm Still Here*. Selton had seen my films and was enthusiastic about the project.

Working with Manuela was easy because she's a very talented, approachable, and sensitive actress. We talked a lot about the character and then tried to help her connect with the place, the dog, and the landscape in a very physical way. There were many meetings between Manuela and Yuri before filming that helped build a relationship between them; that was a main focus. Then, in each scene, we tried different things and reacted to whatever emerged in relation to Yuri and the other characters.

7 - How did you work with the dogs and what was important to you in terms of safety and treatment of the animals?

The key was having two animal experts with us the whole time, Nicolás and Marcela. I had worked with them on another film. We decided right from the start that we were going to adopt two female dogs from animal shelters. I went with them to a number of shelters until we found Yuri. Yuri was a year old and was a restless, alert, and very energetic dog. We also needed a puppy for the role of little Yuri. It was a challenge to find a similar, younger dog because they're mixed breeds. We eventually found Tormenta—that's what they named her—at another shelter. She had been abandoned on a highway, and we adopted her too. They were incredibly alike. She grew up with us on set; the dogs were the heart of the crew—everyone took care of them and loved them. They weren't trained dogs; the trainers had only about a month to prepare them. The trainers helped us come up with games to get the dogs to do the scenes and they got them used to riding on motorcycles, heading home, and so on…

The intense scenes are purely fictional - that's the fun of cinema. Today, both dogs happily live in Santiago; one was adopted by a member of the crew and the other by a family.

8 - The name of the dog - Yuri - also seems to hold a special importance for Silvia. For those who don't know the singer, can you talk a little about this and about the connection?

In the book, the dog is named Chirli, after Shirley, a Colombian beauty queen. It's the name the protagonist had in mind for the daughter she never had.

For the film, we were interested in Silvia's connection to popular music, and that's how we came up with the idea of Yuri. She's a Mexican singer known throughout Latin America who rose to fame in the 1980s. Silvia loves talent shows and singing, so it made perfect sense to name the dog after one of her favorite singers.

9 - The cinematography in the film is stunning. Reflections are also an important motif. Can you tell us about your process?

The prominence of the spaces was very important to me. It's an inhabited island; it's not characters inhabiting an island. Based on that, we took a lot of liberties.

The locations dictated how we filmed them. We had ideas, collages, colors, and various paintings as sources of inspiration, but the challenges we faced in this film also became a form of expression.

Reflections were an important element we wanted to repeat, a way to evoke Silvia's ghosts.

Every day there was a different challenge: a dog swimming in the sea, a giant cliff we had to climb down, the wind that prevented us from hearing each other, the small plane that could only stay on the ground for 20 minutes, the dog that ran off, far away—it was a challenging project that required a lot of improvisation.

There were several unforeseen events we had to factor in. For me, that contradiction and tension between the planned and the moment is interesting. In the end, a film is always a document of a time of shooting. I think recognizing the role of chance and remaining calm in the face of the unexpected has a lot to do with it. There are mysterious and interesting things that arise when collaborating with chance.

10 - Throughout the film there is an interaction of suffering and longing - loss and trauma even - with some kind of resilience, hope, healing or at least reconciliation. Can you discuss these themes in relation to the story and your body of work overall?

I think that in my films there's always, in some way, a loss of innocence.

I'm drawn to exploring trauma; it has to do with trying to understand why we are the way we are, and that fosters empathy in me toward people and characters. In my previous films, there are always characters in transition—from one age to another, from one state to another. Here, I think Silvia also goes from feeling suffocated, underwater, to seeing the horizon. She's a character who doesn't allow herself to feel, but the arrival of the dog reopens that possibility—and also the risk of suffering again.

The way Silvia's and the dog's stories unfold and intersect connects Silvia to tenderness but also to her abandonment, to love and to pain.

Yuri and Silvia seek their freedom, but that doesn't always keep them together.

For Silvia, this is connected to the possibility of motherhood; her trauma shapes her perception of herself and her abilities as a mother. The dog could, in a way, serve as a substitute for motherhood, but on the other hand, that bond with the dog also mirrors motherhood itself and the contradictions that come with being a mother.

The film traces different stages in Silvia and Yuri's relationship. At the beginning, Silvia is hopeful, and Yuri fills an empty space in her house. She grows and accompanies her, occupying an emotional space. When Yuri goes missing, Silvia falls apart. She reappears just when they had given her up for lost. She goes missing again, and now there is remorse and anger. The dog is a mother but doesn't take care of her puppies; Silvia grows weary. I think it's a complex bond, far removed from the idea of the dog as a "faithful best friend." Silvia projects herself onto the dog, but perhaps in the end Silvia also realises that Yuri is just a dog. That, too, is a loss of hope. But an important lesson.

I think motherhood is a lot like that, even though I'm not a mother yet. Pleasant moments and dark ones, times of closeness and times of rebellion—children grow up and cease to be a part of you, transforming into independent beings in search of their own identity and freedom.

"La Perra" is a film about a woman who has crossed the threshold of motherhood and confronts everything unresolved in that empty space. Silvia lives with the quiet certainty that the possibility of becoming a mother has passed, yet the longing, tenderness, and darker impulses attached to that desire persist. They surface in possessiveness, the urge to control, and irrational projections directed toward a dog who becomes the vessel for everything she never allowed herself to feel.

This film is different from my previous films. Here, there are no personal experiences being transposed or fiction growing out of the blank spaces of memory. In this film, I allowed myself to create a fictional story about a woman I didn't know, an island I didn't know. I was drawn to the freedom to do whatever I wanted because I wouldn't be betraying anyone or any memories. That allowed me to go deeper into the darkness. It's a rawer film.

11 - Your films seem to leave much open to interpretation and it would be wrong to attempt to resolve all of their mysteries. How do you balance mystery and resolution in your work?

I'm interested in making films that are imperfect and leave gaps and cracks.I like the viewer's sense of dispersion and freedom. Someone once told me that one of my films reminded them of things they had forgotten, and that really stuck with me, and it's something that excites me every time I make a new film.

I think there are films that grab you and others that let you go. I like to set the viewer free on their own journey. There are also films that make you forget yourself and others that force you to be very present. I find it more interesting when the viewer feels uncomfortable, filling in the gaps, making connections. And in these times when we no longer have time, I'm excited to make films that give you time. I don't know exactly what that means, but I like the idea that watching a film is like having a little extra time to live.

Life is full of insignificant moments and is far more scattered and incomprehensible than most movies. I'm drawn to characters who don't know what they want. Every film is an experiment and a collective experience that gradually finds its own balance; I don't have a set method.

I'm always driven by the same thing: connecting people, ideas, images, and places; doing something that challenges and unsettles me, and that hopefully is different from what I've done before (even though all my films end up looking alike). I like getting into trouble and trying different things.

I'm excited by the idea of filming something that feels alive, and in that sense, has a certain mystery. When something can't be understood, it draws me in. Perhaps the search for balance between mystery and resolution has to do with that. I'm not interested in making conclusive works, delivering messages, or portraying themes; I believe cinema has possibilities far more complex and profound than that.

In my films, there aren't usually any grand scenes; in life, that grand scene never comes either—it's a collection of fragments, some of which we remember and others we erase. That everyday reality has emerged spontaneously in my work, because I always work with what I've observed and what's close to me. Those are the materials I have, from which I try to explore people's relationships with places, nature, other people, or animals. I'm drawn to creating an emotional state through formal decisions.
It is in the liminal spaces and transitions—in those seemingly insignificant moments of everyday life—that I see the possibility of documenting emotions.

Biography Dominga Sotomayor



Dominga Sotomayor is a Chilean filmmaker and visual artist. Her debut feature, *Thursday Till Sunday*, received the Tiger Award for Best Film in Rotterdam. She was awarded Best Direction in Locarno for the film *Too Late to Die Young*. Her photography and video works have been exhibited at the Tate Modern and the Venice Art Biennale. In 2020, she co-directed *Correspondence* with Carla Simón, and premiered the segment *Sin título* in the collective film *The Year of the Everlasting Storm* at the Cannes Film Festival.

Filmography

2020: *Sin título* (short film)
2020: *Correspondencia* (*Correspondence* - short film) co-directed with Carla Símon
2018: *Tarde para morir joven* (Too Late to Die Young)
2015: *Los barcos* (short film)
2014: *Mar* (short film)
2013: *La isla* (short film) co-directed with Katarzyna Klimkiewicz
2012: *De jueves a domingo* (Thursday Till Sunday)

Bio of the cast

Manuela Oyarzún

Manuela Oyarzún Grau is a Chilean actress, playwright, and theatre director, graduated at the University of Chile. In film, she is known for her performances in LA BUENA VIDA by Andrés Wood (Goya Awards winner, 2008), for which she received the Best Actress award at the Biarritz Latin America Film Festival; NO by Pablo Larraín (Directors' Fortnight and Academy Awards nomination, 2012); LA PRÁCTICA by Martín Rejtman (Official Selection at the San Sebastián International Film Festival, 2023); BRUJERIA by Christopher Murray (Sundance Film Festival, 2023); and UNA LUZ NEGRA by Alberto Hayden (Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema, 2024). Her most recent role is the lead in LA PERRA by Dominga Sotomayor, set to premiere at the Cannes Directors' Fortnight 2026.

As a creator and director, she has led interdisciplinary projects that integrate science and biography, consolidating a multidisciplinary artistic identity within the Chilean theatre scene.

David Gaete

Chilean film, television, and theatre actor. He made his film debut with UN LUGAR LLAMADO DIGNIDAD by Matías Rojas (premiered at Tallinn Black Nights Film Festival 2021). He was part of the cast of the television miniseries POEMAS MALDITOS (2024), directed by Pepa San Martín and Juan Ignacio Sabatini, as well as the series VENCER O MORIR (Amazon Prime Video, 2024) and RAZA BRAVA (Showcase at the Guadalajara International Film Festival 2026).

In theatre, he performs in VAMPYR by Manuela Infante, with international tours in Italy, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Colombia, Ecuador, and Singapore. His most recent work includes the feature film GUERRA DE VERANO by Alicia Scherson (Tribeca Film Festival 2026) and LA PERRA by Dominga Sotomayor (Cannes Directors' Fortnight 2026).

Selton Mello

Selton Mello, an acclaimed actor and director celebrating 40 years in cinema, has earned global recognition with iconic roles in A DOG'S WILL (2000); TO THE LEFT OF THE FATHER (2001); LISBELA AND THE PRISONER (2003); DRAINED (2006), MY NAME AIN'T JOHNNY (2008); and JEAN CHARLES (2009). He directed the box-office hit THE CLOWN (winner of 11 Brazilian Academy Awards, including Best Film and Brazil's official Oscar submission, 2013) – and THE MOVIE OF MY LIFE (2017), starring Vincent Cassel.

A member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, he appeared in 2024 in BURY YOUR DEAD and captivated audiences worldwide as Rubens Paiva in the Oscar-winning I'M STILL HERE. In 2026, he stars in LA PERRA, directed by Chilean filmmaker Dominga Sotomayor, and I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO I WAS, directed by João Paulo Miranda Maria.

Producers

RT FEATURES

Founded by Rodrigo Teixeira in 2006, RT Features is one of the main audiovisual production companies in Latin America and the most prominent Brazilian film company in the international market. Its films are internationally recognized, having been nominated for over 50 awards - of which 9 Oscar and 6 Golden Globe nods.

RT Features is one of the production companies, along with VideoFilmes e Mact Productions, of the acclaimed *I'm Still Here* (2024), directed by Walter Salles, winner of the Oscar for Best International Film. It also has released both critical and commercial successes such as *Invisible Life* (2019), by Karim Aïnouz; *The Lighthouse* (2019), by Robert Eggers; *Call Me By Your Name* (2017), by Luca Guadagnino; and *Frances Ha* (2013), by Noah Baumbach; among others.

PLANTA

Planta is a film production company based in Santiago, Chile. Founded in 2010 by producer Fernando Bascuñán, it specializes in projects that bring together emerging voices and established talent. Its films have premiered at international festivals such as Cannes, Venice, Sundance, and Rotterdam. Among its productions are *Simón de la montaña*, by Federico Luis (Grand Prix – Cannes Critics' Week 2024); *Cuerpo celeste*, by Nayra Ilic (Jury Mention, Tribeca Festival 2025); *Rapaz*, by Felipe Gálvez (Cannes Critics' Week 2018); *Vida de familia*, by Alicia Scherson and Cristián Jiménez (Sundance and Rotterdam 2017); and *Las analfabetas*, by Moisés Sepúlveda (Venice Critics' Week 2013). Planta is currently preparing the premieres of *La libertad doble*, by Lisandro Alonso, and *La perra*, by Dominga Sotomayor, in the Quinzaine des Cinéastes, as well as the short film *Para los contrincantes*, by Federico Luis, in the Official Selection of the Cannes Film Festival.

Cast

Silvia	Manuela Oyarzún
Mario	David Gaete
Duda	Selton Mello
Alba	Paula Luchsinger
Ximena	Paula Dinamarca
young Silvia	Rafaella Grimberg

Credits

Director	Dominga Sotomayor
Adaptation	Dominga Sotomayor and Inés Bortagaray
Screenplay	Inés Bortagaray
Director of Photography	Simone D'Arcangelo
Production designer	Natalia Geisse
Editor	Federico Rotstein
Casting director	Francisca Castillo
Costume designer	Francisca Tuca
Music Composer	Clint Mansell
Based on the novel "La Perra"	Pilar Quintana
Producers	Rodrigo Teixeira Fernando Bascuñán Berta Marchiori
Executive producers	Nicolás San Martín Selton Mello Fernando Fuentes
Development executive producer	Fernanda Frotté
Production Companies	RT Features Planta
With the support of	Fondo de Fomento Audiovisual Convocatorias 2024 & 2026 of the Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio del Gobierno de Chile (a fund from the Government of Chile).



RT/ FEATURES

PLANTA

Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio
Gobierno de Chile

Lucky Number

Projeto Paradiso