
BY FEDERICO LUIS
FOR THE OPPONENTS
FESTIVAL DE CANNES
PALME D'OR
2026 SHORT FILM
LUXBOX



ORIGINAL TITLE: *PARA LOS CONTRINCANTES*
INTERNATIONAL TITLE: *FOR THE OPPONENTS*
COUNTRIES: Mexico, Chile, France, UK
PRODUCTION YEAR: 2026
DURATION: 15 min.
LANGUAGE: Spanish
TECHNICAL INFORMATION: Ratio 4:3 I 4K I Sound 5.1 I 24 FPS

MAIN CAST Damian López, Jesús Esquivel, Ian Haziel Castillo, Jair Monroy, Isaac Rivas Cruz, Wil Pérez

DIRECTOR & SCREENWRITER: Federico Luis
DOP: Marcos Hastrup
ART DIRECTOR: Ángela Bravo
EDITOR: Andrés Medina
SOUND: Martín García Blaya
MUSIC: Satoshi & Makoto
PRODUCTION: Planta, Cárcava, Fiasco, Deptford Film
COPRODUCTION: Les films du Worso, Estudios Churubusco Azteca, Cineteca Nacional de Chile, Aura Lens Rental
WORLD SALES: Luxbox Films

SYNOPSIS

In the tough neighbourhood of Tepito, a young boy chases the great Mexican dream: to become a boxing champion.

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Federico Luis was born in Buenos Aires in 1990. After several short films, including *The Nap* which premiered in Cannes Competition in 2019, his debut feature *Simon of the Moutain* won the Grand Prix at Cannes Critics' Week 2024, as well as Best Film at Munich and Lima. He is currently developing his second feature, *The Dog Trainer*, selected at The Residence of Cannes, TorinoFilmLab, the Spanish Film Academy Residency and Oxbelly.

CONTACTS

International Press · barbara@theprfactory.com · +32 486 54 64 80
Mexican Press · prensa@fiasco.mx · infocarcava@gmail.com
Argentine & Chilean Press · produccion@plantacine.cl
Sales · jennyfer@luxboxfilms.com · natacha@luxboxfilms.com
Festivals · festivals@luxboxfilms.com



INTERVIEW WITH FEDERICO LUIS

WHAT INITIALLY DREW YOU TO CHILD BOXING IN TEPITO, AND WHAT MADE YOU FEEL IT WAS A WORLD THAT NEEDED TO BE FILMED? WHY DID DAMIÁN STAND OUT AMONG ALL THE YOUNG FIGHTERS YOU ENCOUNTERED?

For the past two years, my main focus has been writing the screenplay for *The Dog Trainer,* my second feature film. The story is inspired by a character I came across in a book by the Mexican writer Mario Bellatin. He is a completely immobile man who specializes in breeding attack dogs of the Belgian Malinois breed.

This process brought me very close to Mario. Whenever I go to visit him at his house, Mario avoids sitting down to talk. He prefers to go out and chat as we stroll. Through those walks, I got to know Mexico City and became fascinated by it and grew fond of it.

One day, he told me we were going to Tepito to watch boxing. As soon as we arrived, I discovered the surprise: it was really a boxing tournament, but featuring fighters between the ages of 7 and 14.

The atmosphere in the gym swept me up. I forgot what Mario and I had been talking about and started looking all around. Everything looked very professional and competitive. I think I watched one or two fights in a state of near shock. Then Damián appeared. He was the next boxer. His gaze moved me deeply. I couldn't take my eyes off him from the moment he began warming up outside the ring, during the fight, or after it ended.

I tried to understand why I couldn't stop looking at him. I think that, through his eyes, I felt I could glimpse a completely different perspective on the disturbing world of children's boxing: it allowed me to see it from a more sensitive, more porous, more complex, and more empathetic angle than that initial, flat, rational shock that had gripped me at first. I felt that all the emotions floating in that gym were condensed into Damián's expressive. And I really wanted to film him.

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO SHOOT ON 16MM, AND WHAT DID IT BRING TO THE FILM VISUALLY AND EMOTIONALLY?

I thought that shooting in 16 mm was a way for me, as a filmmaker, to get closer to the risk, the pressure, and the need to be decisive that Damián's character faced.

It's true that shooting on film changes the visual look of the movie, but what interested me most was how it transforms the nature of the shoot.

The feeling among the entire crew is that there really will be very few shots, that each one is a serious matter, that there's no room for "trial and error," that you have to take a risk with every decision, and that you have to focus all your attention, energy, and presence on each one.

On the other hand, boxing matches themselves already have their own very specific and fixed timing. They consist of three 2-minute rounds, with 1-minute breaks in between—which is practically the same length of time as a roll of 16mm film.

THE ADULTS ARE MOSTLY KEPT OUT OF FRAME, APPEARING ONLY THROUGH VOICES OR FRAGMENTS. WHY WAS THAT IMPORTANT, AND HOW DOES IT SHAPE THE WAY WE SEE THE STORY?

What led me to make this short film wasn't the desire to "portray reality" or a "wholeness," but simply to capture Damián's narrow, subjective view of that world. It was a way to explore that perspective, to try to understand it, to play at recreating it.

I was excited by the idea of entering that state of euphoria and exhaustion so characteristic of childhood—a state in which the rest of the world is put on hold and nothing seems to exist except what one feels. That's why I wasn't so interested in the adults themselves, but only as ghostly presences hovering over the child's point of view.

THE FILM SITS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN DOCUMENTARY AND FICTION. HOW DID YOU APPROACH THAT BALANCE?

Through the short films I've made and *Simon of the Mountain*, I've come to realize that the tools of fiction filmmaking intrigue me just as much as those of documentary filmmaking. I'm excited to discover new ways—at least for me—of combining them to shape a film's unique language. As you get to know the subject you're going to film better, you start to get a sense of which methods might be best for capturing that particular emotion the subject conveys. In this case, for example, combining the documentary approach of creating a real event for the shoot with scriptwriting; or a real fight with a staged one.

THERE'S A STRONG TENSION BETWEEN BEAUTY AND BRUTALITY, INNOCENCE AND VIOLENCE. HOW DID YOU WORK WITH/BETWEEN THOSE CONTRADICTIONS?

I think it's the world we live in that creates those contradictions, and that filmmaking is a game that involves uncovering them and finding a way to capture them within a film.

HOW IS THE PREPARATION FOR YOUR NEXT FEATURE FILM GOING? WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT IT?

The Dog Trainer tells the story of a young soldier, who accidentally loses a very dangerous and very valuable military working dog. He must recover it, so he tracks the dog down until he reaches the remote house of its former breeder. This guy is a motionless and deformed man, who lives with his nurse who has been serving him for many years… and his twenty dogs trained to kill anyone with a single bite to the neck. He will want to keep the soldier in his house, make him quit the army and transform himself into his new nurse.

It is a story about "monsters", where what is truly monstrous is love.

I have been working on the script for this film for the last two years with Matías Fernández Burzaco, co-writer and main actor. We finished the last version during La Residence du Festival de Cannes, after several versions and passing through several laboratories and tutorships. We are now starting the financing stage for production.

I'm really happy to have gone through my first shooting experience in Mexico with *For The Opponents.* I have discovered an entirely new fascinating and welcoming world in Mexico, and a lot of valuable people who I'd like to work with in *The Dog Trainer*.