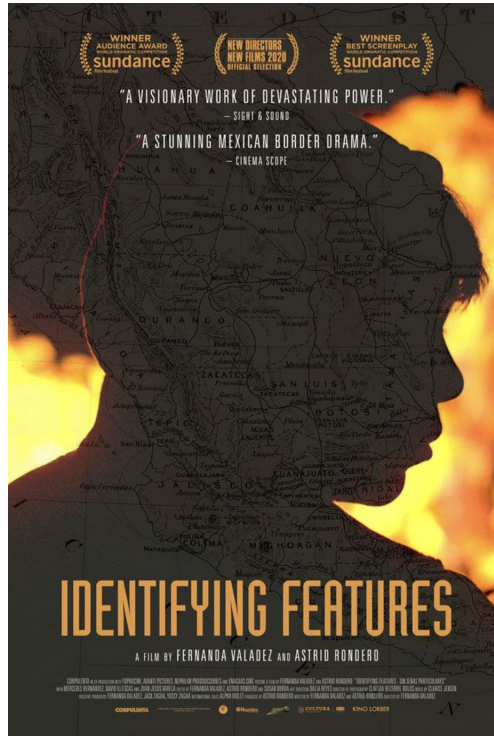


KINO LORBER

IDENTIFYING FEATURES

A film by Fernanda Valadez

Screenplay by Fernanda Valadez and Astrid Rondero



****Official Selection for New Directors/New Films 2020****

****Sundance Film Festival 2020 - Winner for World Cinema Dramatic Audience Award & Special Jury Award for Best Screenplay****

Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2020 - Golden Alexander for Best Film

PyeongChang International Peace Film Festival 2020 – Grand Jury Prize

San Sebastian Film Festival 2020 – Horizontes Latinos Award, Spanish Cooperation Award

Morelia International Film Festival 2020 – Audience Award, Best Actress Award & Best Film

Zurich Film Festival 2020 – Golden Eye Award for Best Film

Stockholm International Film Festival 2020 – Best Debut and Best Director Award

Torino Film Festival 2020 – Special Jury Prize & Best Actress Award

2020/94 min/2.35:1/Mexico, Spain/Color/ Spanish

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SYNOPSIS

Identifying Features tells the story of Magdalena, a mother who embarks on a journey in search of her son who disappeared en route to the US border. Traveling through the foreboding towns and landscapes of northern Mexico, she meets Miguel, a young man recently deported from the United States who is making his way home. The two accompany one another: Magdalena looking for her son, and Miguel eager to see his mother again in a territory where victims and aggressors ramble together. The poignant drama, set in the current Mexican humanitarian crisis, spotlights the country's failed war against drug cartels, disappearances of migrants bound for the U.S. and the dangerous odyssey of those looking for missing family members.



DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Fernanda Valadez. Director and producer, Guanajuato, Mexico, 1981. Graduate of Centro de Capacitación Cinematográfica (CCC). Her first short film “De este mundo”, received the best short film award at the Guanajuato Film Festival. It was considered the best Mexican short of the year by the Mexican Chamber of Film Industry. Her graduation short film, “400 bags”, was selected for the Editing Studio of the Berlinale Talents and received different awards around the world. It was also nominated as Best Short by the Mexican Academy of Cinematic Arts (Ariel) in 2015 and was a finalist of the Student Academy Awards in that same year. The script of her first feature *Identifying Features (Sin señas particulares)* was written with the grant Young Artists of the Mexican Fund for the Arts (FONCA). The project later received funds from FOPROCINE (Mexican Fund for the Production of Quality Cinema) and recently post production funds from EFICINE. The film received the work in progress award of the San Sebastián Film Festival.

In 2018 Fernanda received a script writing grant from FONCA, with which she is writing her next feature, *Rambler*. Fernanda is founding partner of the production companies ENAGUAS CINE and CORPULENTA with which she has produced the films *Plastic* (by Ricardo Soto, 2015, developed in Locarno’s filmmakers Academy) and *The Darkest Days of Us* (by Astrid Rondero, 2017, supported by Tribeca’s Latin America Fund and Berlinale Talents Script Station, Nominated as Best First Feature and Best Actress by the Mexican Academy of Cinematic Arts 2019). She is also the producer of the documentary *Dear Ana*, currently in post production, by renowned director Alejandra Sánchez.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Identifying Features tells the story of Magdalena, a woman making a journey to find her son, gone missing on his way to the border with the US. This film is an exploration of the horrors and contradictions of today's Mexico, of a whirlwind of violence that doesn't seem to end, and of the unfortunate path of the migrants. But it is also a story of resistance, of our capacity to give meaning to a fractured existence, even if the meaning is endurance itself. *Identifying Features* is my first feature film as a director. It represents a long journey that began around 2012. Back then, we began to receive news that expressed a deep social and humanitarian crisis in Mexico: disappearance and killings of activists and journalists; massive violence against migrants, women and minorities; emergence of dozens of clandestine mass graves; increasing numbers of internally displaced people; populated settlements changing into ghost towns. The perception of my surroundings changed irreversibly, and after shaking off the comfort of Mexico City, where I've been living for over 15 years, I went back to my hometown, where violence has flourished.

I found the story I wanted to tell in the travelers and immigrants vanishing by the day, and in the families that look for them in the mass graves where corpses appear by the hundreds. I also found that fiction was the tool I needed to recover those voices and translate them into a group of characters and their journeys, journeys that might seem like a descent to hell. I tried to structure *Identifying Features* as a road movie, more lyrical than naturalistic, looking for the sensation of a thriller. I figured this mixture of elements would help me express a human phenomenon that left me without words. I wanted to open questions about the cycles of violence and about our capacity to transit the boundaries that divides victims and perpetrators, a thin border that lives within ourselves. I don't yet know how much of what I wanted to tell communicates through the film. But I feel fortunate that I got to shoot it. I'm certain that when time passes, I will look back and find more mature stories that better portray this moment. I can only say that I felt a deep urge to tell this one now.

KEY CREW BIOS

LEADING ACTRESS: MERCEDES HERNÁNDEZ

Respected Mexican Actress, producer and storyteller, Mercedes Hernández has performed in more than 25 theater plays. She is also into performative storytelling and has performed internationally. For this work she received a FONCA grant as a performer. Her first film credit as an actress was in Cannes' Certain Regard selected *The Violin* in 2005. Later, she went to participate with renowned Mexican director Carlos Carrera's *Of Childhood* (2010). Among other films it stands out Jorge Pérez Solano *La Tirisia* for which she received a BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS NOMINATION by the Mexican Academy of Arts and Sciences (Ariel) in 2015. In 2020 she will premiere her

first leading acting credit, under director Fernanda Valadez, in her debut film *Identifying Features*, which screened and won awards at Sundance 2020.

WRITER-PRODUCER: ASTRID RONDERO

Astrid Rondero has received grants and support from Tribeca Film Institute, Berlinale Talents (Script Station 2014, Editing Studio 2010), Women in Film Finishing Fund, Gabriel Figueroa Film Fund among others. Her first feature, *The Darkest Days Of Us*, obtained 7 international awards as Best Feature in the US, France, Colombia, Santo Domingo and Mexico and was nominated as Best First Feature Film and Best Actress by the Mexican Academy of Arts and Sciences (Arieles 2019). Astrid is founding partner of the production companies ENAGUAS CINE and CORPULENTA. She is the producer of *Identifying Features*, directed by Fernanda Valadez, winner at San Sebastian Work in progress and to be premiered at SUNDANCE 2020. She is post producing an exciting Documentary Film *La Colonia* by young Mexican director David Buitron. She is currently financing her second feature, *Sujo*. Her new film script was written with a Grant for Young Artists of the Mexican Fund for the Arts (FONCA 2019) and was invited to the Sundance Story Lab held in Morelia, Mexico, in October 2019.

CINEMATOGRAPHER: CLAUDA BECERRIL

Graduated with honors Cum Laude in the specialty of Cinematography at the CCC film school with the short films *Primal Force* (2017) and *Oak Leaves* (2016). She is the cinematographer of feature documentary films *Bath Of Life* (2016) and *45 Days in Harbar* (2018), and feature films *The Silence Is Welcome* (2017) and *Identifying Features* (2020). She has been awarded by Pantalla de Cristal as best cinematographer 2017 for Dalia Reyes' *Bath of Life*.

EDITOR: SUSAN KORDA

Korda studied filmmaking at CCNY and has worked as an editor for 20 years. With David Leitner, she directed and produced the 1989 award-winning documentary *Vienna Is Different*. She produced another award-winning documentary in 2000, *One of Us*. Her short narrative film *Salomea's Nose* won many international awards. Her editing credits include the 1989 Oscar®-nominated documentary *For All Mankind* and Sandi DuBowski's groundbreaking *Trembling Before G-d* (2001). She was a producer on Emily and Sarah Kunstler's *William Kunstler: Disturbing the Universe*, and story consultant on Alan Berliner's *The Sweetest Sound* and *First Cousin Once Removed*. Korda teaches at Columbia University and conducts editing and storytelling workshops in the U.S., Europe, Israel, and South Africa.

MUSIC COMPOSER: CLARICE JENSEN

Clarice Jensen is the artistic director of ACME, the American Contemporary Music Ensemble. A graduate of The Juilliard School, she studied with Joel Krosnick, Harvey

Shapiro and has taken master classes with many composers such as Milton Babbitt, Elliott Carter and Roger Reynolds. Recording artists she has collaborated with include Jóhann Jóhannsson, Stars of the Lid, Owen Pallett, Max Richter, Tyondai Braxton and numerous others. Her most recent performances include concerts at The Kings Theatre, Elbphilharmonie (Hamburg), Disney Hall, Benaroya Hall, The Sydney Opera House, Big Ears Festival, Duke Performances, BAM, (le) Poisson Rouge, Roulette, and the Isamu Noguchi Museum. Recording collaborations have been released on Deutsche Grammophon, Kranky, Warp, Matador, Brassland, Domino, Merge, Jagjaguwar, Domino, New World, 4AD and many others.

CAST

Magdalena Mercedes Hernández
Miguel David Illescas
Jesús Juan Jesús Varela
Olivia Ana Laura Rodríguez
Chuya Laura Elena Ibarra
Pedro Xicoténcatl Ulloa

CREW

Director - Fernanda Valadez
Producers - Astrid Rondero, Fernanda Valadez, Jack Zagher, Yossy Zagher
Script - Fernanda Valadez, Astrid Rondero
Cinematography - Claudia Becerril
Art Director - Dalia Reyes
Editing - Fernanda Valadez, Astrid Rondero, Susan Korda
Sound Recordist - Misael Hernández
Sound Design - Omar Juárez
Original Music - Clarice Jensen

PRODUCTION COMPANIES:

CORPULENTA, FOPROCINE, AVANTI PICTURES,
ENAGUAS CINE, NEPHILIM PRODUCCIONES

PRODUCTION NOTES

Identifying Features has been a long term project. The social approach of the film (the story dealing with the enforced disappearances in the migrant route and the pilgrimage of those looking for their missing loved ones; the humanitarian crisis we live in Mexico) made the financing process long and complicated. So the film was shot with a reduced cash flow, complemented with in-kind contributions. This formula made us change the original production plan for a smaller scheme, more portable and flexible, that allowed

us to reinforce the bond with the communities where we shot, privileged the weather we needed and protected a generous shooting schedule. In this sense, we were able to shoot along nine weeks in the course of a year. Four of these weeks were shot with a very small crew, consisting of only the director, the cinematographer, the producer (who was also the sound recordist) and one of the actors. But the cash limitations did not translate into creative ones, because we had the opportunity to approach the project from a perspective that enriched the story and the characters, also letting us learn the beauty and challenges of the Mexican countryside, as well as the unfortunate path of the migrants.

Identifying Features was shot mostly by women filmmakers. The cast was a mix of professional actors from Mexico City, and young performers from the communities where we worked, the last ones well versed in the motives to emigrate.

About Kino Lorber

With a library of over 4,000 titles, Kino Lorber Inc. has been a leader in independent art house distribution for 35 years, releasing 30 films per year theatrically under its Kino Lorber, Kino Repertory and Alive Mind Cinema banners, garnering seven Academy Award® nominations in nine years. In addition, the company brings over 350 titles yearly to the home entertainment and educational markets through physical and digital media releases. With an expanding family of distributed labels, Kino Lorber handles releases in ancillary media for Zeitgeist Films, Cohen Media Group, Greenwich Entertainment, Artsploitation, Palisades Tartan, Menemsha Films, Raro Video, and others, placing physical titles through all wholesale, retail, and direct to consumer channels, as well as direct digital distribution through over 40 OTT services including all major TVOD and SVOD platforms. In 2019, the company launched its new art house digital channel Kino Now which features over 1000 titles from the acclaimed Kino Lorber library. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kino Marquee initiative was launched in 2020 pioneering "virtual theatrical" releases of art house films with revenue shares that allows audiences to support almost 400 local independent theaters.