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PRESENT



ALCARRÀS

A FILM BY CARLA SIMÓN



2022 – SPAIN/ITALY – DRAMA – 2K – 5.1 – CATALAN – 120'



SYNOPSIS

As far as they can remember, the Solé family have spent every summer picking the peaches from their orchard in Alcarràs, a small village in Spain. But this year's crop could be their last, as they face eviction. The new plans for the land include cutting down the peach trees and installing solar panels, which causes a rift within the large tight-knit family. For the first time, they face an uncertain future and risk losing more than their home.

DIRECTOR NOTES

Alcarràs is a tiny village in deepest Catalonia, where my family grows peaches. When my grandfather died, my uncles inherited the land and its care. Grief for my grandfather brought me to value my family's legacy and their dedication to farming. I learned to appreciate the trees they cultivate as something that could someday be destroyed. This is how the plot of "Alcarràs" came to me: a family of farmers – the Solés – are about to lose their peach trees as the owner wants to put solar panels in his fields.

Human beings have cultivated the land in family groups since the Neolithic. It's the most ancient profession of all time. But the truth is that the story of the Solé family comes at a time when this way of agriculture is no longer sustainable. There is the real question of what agriculture means to us today. We wanted to pay a nostalgic but unsentimental tribute to the last resistant families of farmers still hanging on to their traditions.

This is also a film about family relationships, generational tensions and the importance of unity in times of crisis. It was conceived as an ensemble piece due to my desire to express what it means to be part of a huge family. Crossed dialogues, opposed energies, chaos, small but meaningful gestures, emotions that cause domino effects... Each member of the Solé family tries to find their own place just as they are about to lose their common identity.

We worked with non-professional actors from the area of Alcarràs who have a real attachment to the land. In order to present themselves as a real family, they spent so much time together that now they call each other by their characters' names.

Carla Simón

INTERVIEW WITH CARLA SIMÓN

Can you tell us in a few words what ALCARRÀS is about?

ALCARRÀS is a chronicle of a death foretold. The Solé family learns they will have to leave the land they've cultivated for three generations near the Catalonian country town of Alcarràs at the end of the summer. The owner wants to uproot their peach trees to put solar panels in his fields. The family gathers to pick the last harvest, but their differences about how to face an uncertain future threaten their unity. This is an ensemble piece where each member of the Solé family tries to find their own place in the crisis, at the very moment when their shared identity is at risk.

What are the main themes which run through ALCARRÀS?

On one hand, the film is a reflection on agriculture today. Many believe that the land should belong to those who work it, and the Solé family has been farming the same fields for many years. But they only arrived at an unofficial understanding with the owner during the Spanish Civil War. Now a contract is worth more than any verbal agreement, and the new owner wants them to leave. How long can tradition and change coexist in this place?

Human beings have cultivated the land in small family groups since the Neolithic. It's the oldest job of all time. But the truth is that the Solé's story comes at a moment when this way of doing agriculture is no longer sustainable. Big companies buy the land to cultivate it extensively, the low fruit prices force the replacement of trees in exchange for higher yield uses, and young farmers leave their homes to try to find other employment. The models are changing, an old world is ending, and our film is a nostalgic tribute to the last families of farmers who still resist. Despite the bad auguries, I hope ecological agriculture will be the bright tomorrow for those who want to keep cultivating the land in small groups.

This is a reflection on the need of adaptation, as we portray the last days of a universe that its inhabitants believed to be eternal. It's also a reflection on the lack of communication between family members, and how sometimes everything would be easier if we said out loud what we think and how we feel. I often think of ALCARRÀS as an action movie. There are no explosions, gunfights, or spectacular special effects, but the characters live on an emotional roller coaster that shakes up their relationships.

How did you come up with the idea of this film originally?

My uncles cultivate peaches in Alcarràs. They did it together with my grandfather but he died a few years ago. I spent all my Christmas and summer holidays on their land. Everything lived and shared in this place has a huge emotional value to my family. Suddenly, I felt the need to portray this place, its light, its trees and fields, its people, their faces, the toughness of their job, the heat in the summer... I feel it has a huge cinematic value. A last harvest on this family's land was a good set up to talk about a world that is about to end.

ALCARRÀS tells the story of a large family of farmers. Why is this subject so inspiring to you?

My main source of inspiration is my big family; they're a bottomless source of stories. We very often get together, and I find myself surrounded by grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, siblings... My life has always been full of people. This film was conceived as an ensemble piece due to my desire to portray what it is to be part of a huge family. Crossed dialogues, opposed energies, chaos, small but meaningful gestures, emotional domino effects... Everyone has their own axe to grind, but they all need to find a way to live together.

Why did you choose to work with non-professional actors?

I always look for naturalism in actors. I think the closer the actors are to the characters they play, the more truthful they are. I wanted this film to be played by farmers who work the land, who can understand the idea of losing it. Most of the people of the area of Alcarràs are farmers or come from farmers' families. I was sure we could find good actors amongst them. Moreover, there are children and teenagers in the cast; they were always going to be natural actors.

Apart from that, this region of Spain speaks a very specific Catalan dialect. There aren't many actors from the area, and to portray this place faithfully, it was important to respect its language.

To find our actors, we went to every village fair (this was before COVID) to invite everyone who might fit into our cast to auditions. We saw more than 9.000 people. I was hoping to cast some members of the same family, but this didn't happen, every member of the Solé family comes from a different village. So we spent a lot of time together, improvising moments in order to build their relationships.

Your film takes place in Alcarràs, a municipality located in Catalonia, in Spain. Although the setting is very specific, what is universal about your story?

We all have family, all of us can relate to family stories. At the end, you don't choose your family: you are born into it. That is why family relationships are so complex and deep, so full of contradictions and so unconditional at the same time. Also, agriculture is something that affects us all; it's what we get to eat every day. Thinking about who provides us with food and how they do it is something we should all do. Structurally, the replacement of traditional farming by the agricultural industry is a world-wide phenomenon.

ABOUT CARLA SIMÓN

Carla Simón (born 1986) is a film writer and director raised in a small Catalan village. She studied Audio-visual Communication in Barcelona and in California. In 2011 she was awarded a scholarship by La Caixa for a Master's program at the London Film School, where she directed the short films BORN POSITIVE, LIPSTICK, LAS PEQUEÑAS COSAS and LLACUNES.

SUMMER 1993 (2017) is her autobiographical debut. It won the Best First Feature Award and the Generation Kplus Grand Prix at the Berlinale, along with three Goya awards, including Best New Director. The film collected more than 30 prizes all over the world, it was selected to represent Spain at the 2018 Oscar Academy Awards and it got the Discovery nomination at the European Film Awards. In 2018, during the 71st edition of the Festival de Cannes, Carla received the Kering|Women In Motion Young Talent Award. The prize, which aims to help female film makers gain visibility and recognition, was accompanied by a 50.000€ grant that contributed to support Alcarràs.

Her last short films are IF THEN ELSE and CORRESPONDENCE, an epistolary conversation with Dominga Sotomayor shown in Visions du Réel, New York Film Festival or San Sebastian.

ALCARRÀS is Carla's second feature. It took part in the Torino Script Lab, Nipkow Program, MFI and Cannes Residency.

FILMOGRAPHY

2020	CORRESPONDENCE Documentary Short
2019	IF THEN ELSE Short
2016	SUMMER 1993 Feature Berlinale - Best First Feature Award 2027 Berlinale - Grand Prix of the Generation Kplus International Jury 2017
2016	LLACUNES Short
2014	LAS PEQUEÑAS COSAS Short
2013	LIPSTICK Short
2012	BORN POSITIVE Documentary Short
2009	WOMEN Short

CAST

Quimet	Jordi Pujol Dolcet
Dolors	Anna Otín
Mariona	Xènia Roset
Roger	Albert Bosch
Iris	Ainet Jounou
Rogelio	Josep Abad
Nati	Montse Oró
Cisco	Carles Cabós
Pere	Joel Rovira
Pau	Isaac Rovira
Glòria	Berta Pipó
Teia	Elna Folguera
Pepita	Antònia Castells
Boubou	Djibril Casse
Joaquim Pinyol	Jacob Diarte

CREW

Director	Carla Simón
Writer	Carla Simón
Co-Writer	Arnau Vilaró
Producers	María Zamora, Stefan Schmitz, Tono Folguera, Sergi Moreno
Co-producer	Giovanni Pompili
Executive Producer	María Zamora, Giovanni Pompili
Delegate Producers	Emilia Fort, Ariadna Dot, Carla Sospedra
Delegate Producers Catalonia TV	Oriol Sala-Patau, Cruz Rodríguez
Director of Photography	Daniela Cajías (AEC)
Editor	Ana Pfaff (AMMAC)
Artistic Director	Monica Bernuy
Casting Director	Mireia Juárez
Producer Management	Elisa Sirvent (APPA)
Director Assistant	Daniela Forn
Costumes	Anna Aguilà
Makeup	Giovanna Turco
Hair	Arturo Montoro
Sound	Eva Valiño
Sound Designer	Thomas Giorgi
Sound Mixer	Damiano Silva
Music Consultant	Frederic Schindler
Original Music	Andrea Koch

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