

CÉSAR'S GRILL

A documentary by Darío Aguirre

Germany / Switzerland 2013, 88 min. Farbe, Dolby digital
Produced by FILMTANK in Coproduction with RECK Filmproduktion, SRF,
NDR
in cooperation with arte.
Supported by Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig Holstein, Kuratorium junger
deutscher Film, BKM, FFA, Zürcher Filmstiftung

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CÉSAR'S GRILL

My father, César, always thought that I would eventually assume responsibility for running his grill restaurant in Ecuador, but at the age of twenty, I moved to Germany and became a vegetarian.

Ten years later, when my father phoned me for the first time since I had settled in Germany, he told me that his restaurant was going bust, that he had debts with a number of loan sharks and at the bank, and that he hadn't paid any rent for over two years. I suddenly had the feeling that life in Ecuador, which until recently had seemed so distant, was tangibly close, and that saving this restaurant could be our first joint project.

What began as an absurd debate about opening hours, Excel tables and wholesale market prices, evolved to become a touching family drama with much music and song.

THE STORY

Dario Aguirre has been living in Germany for 10 years. He left his hometown of Ambato in Ecuador to study art in Hamburg. He left his father César's grill restaurant to become a vegetarian in Germany.

But just when he finally believes that he has left his past behind him, he receives the first phone call in a decade from his father, who tells him that his restaurant is about to go out of business and asks for his help. Dario sends money and Excel tables and debates with his father over the phone, but when his mother finally throws up her arms and decides to move in with her mother, who lives a six hours' drive away, he sees no alternative: he boards a plane to stand by his father's side.

When Dario arrives, he rapidly realizes that it won't be easy to put into practice his German-influenced notions of a structured and successful restaurant operation. But he doesn't just run into difficulties due to differing views and lifestyles, but also because of César, who is incapable of accepting his son as a consultant, and resorts to crafty, absurd and, in some cases, even reasonable arguments to avoid taking his advice. What's more, Dario increasingly realizes that the problem has less to do with the ailing family-owned business and more to do with the family itself – coming to terms with dashed expectations and feelings of guilt that are never talked about, and with the process of growing up and assuming responsibility for one another.

"My father and I are masters of non-communication."

Dario's mother has always acted as a liaison between the two. Now her son is asking for advice over the phone when he can no longer make any headway with the headstrong César. But this source of wisdom disappears when the mother is diagnosed with cancer and soon dies as a result of chemotherapy.

This leaves the two men entirely on their own and with the realization that there is no one left to bring a sense of balance to the family relationships. Faced with this situation and the need to come to terms with their grief, they ultimately manage to open up to each other in a dramatic encounter during a journey to the father's parental home. They return to the city and prepare a big celebration to mark the reopening of the renovated restaurant, complete with sausages and Oktoberfest pennants from Germany:

"My father's debts may have actually grown somewhat with my help, but at least my departure this time will be different than it was back then."
And that's exactly what happens.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I've always had an estranged relationship with my father. Nevertheless it seemed perfectly natural to me to help my father out of his difficult situation. But my motivation to make this into a film was that of exploiting this opportunity of tackling a project with him for the first time. I saw this as a chance to find points in common between us: what happens when I leave my world and immerse myself in his?

My return to a past life was a quest for both recognition and closeness. I sought reconciliation with my father and with a country that I had left many years ago.

When my mother became ill and died during the making of the film, we had to ask ourselves whether we should, or could, continue with this project. I believed that it would help both me and my father to overcome the entire situation – and my father was also willing to give it a try. Today, I'm glad that we continued working together on the project.

FILMOGRAPHY

Darío Aguirre

Darío Alonso Aguirre Guevara was born in Ecuador in 1979. After he finished secondary school, he moved to Germany in 2000. He completed his studies in "visual communication/media" focusing on film at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg. His documentary films always contain autobiographical references and deal with feelings of alienation and estrangement, combined with experiencing the process of separation. In addition to his studies, he was involved with TIDE TV, and he organized workshops and program series in collaboration with ambulart e.V. In 2006, he received a grant from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in recognition of his outstanding academic achievements and extraordinary dedication to social and intercultural issues.

FILMOGRAPHY (selected):

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| 2013 | Cesars Grill , short documentary, 88min., NDR/ arte, FFHSH, Kuratorium junger Deutscher Film, BKM, FFA, Züricher Filmstiftung, SRF |
| 2009 | Five Ways to Dario , short documentary, 80 min
FFHSH, Kuratorium junger deutscher Film |
| 2008 | Connected by drums , short documentary, 24 min
For the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival |
| 2007 | Schlaflied für einen Rückkehrer , short documentary, 15 min
For the des Goethe-Instituts |
| 2007 | Bodyfront , short documentary, 12 min
Internationales Kurzfilmfestival Hamburg |
| 2005 | My last day as a fictive person , short documentary, 10 min
Unesco „UNICA“ medal |
| 2004 | Lorenz , short fiction, 28 min |

FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

DEUTSCHE FILM- UND MEDIENBEWERTUNGSSTELLE (German Film Quality Assessment Board):

Prädikat *besonders wertvoll* ("Especially Valuable")

SPECIAL MENTION MAX-OPHÜLSPREIS

CREW

Darío Aguirre	SCRIPT AND DIRECTION
Thomas Tielsch	PRODUCER
Franziska Reck	COPRODUCER
Filmtank GmbH	PRODUCTION COMPANY
Reck Filmproduktion GmbH	COPRODUCTION COMPANY
Julia Cöllen	PRODUCERIN
Britta Strampe	PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT
Santiago Oviedo	D.O.P
Julia Drache	EDITING
Andrés Galarza, Felipe Alvarez	SOUND
Victor Orozco	ANIMATION
Daniel Almada	MUSIC
Guido Keller	MIXING

PRODUCTION

Filmtank

FILMTANK was founded in 2001 as a joint project by Wüste Film and Thomas Tielsch in Hamburg. There are now also branches in Stuttgart and Berlin. The company's producers and managing directors are Thomas Tielsch, who has been making documentaries as a director and producer since 1983, and Saskia Kress in Berlin.

FILMTANK has so far completed over forty full-length and one-hour documentary films and series, many of them as international coproductions.

Its most recent cinematic productions include **The Woman with the 5 Elephants** (Vadim Jendreyko 2009), **Nothing Is Better than Nothing at All** (Jan Peters 2010), **The Singing City** (Vadim Jendreyko 2010) and **The Venice Syndrome** (Andreas Pichler 2012).

Filmtank has received a wide range of awards such as the Grimme Award, the German Film Award (nominated), the Swiss Film Prize, Prix Italia, Globo d'Oro and the BFI's Grierson Award.

RECK Filmproduktion

Since the foundation of RECK Filmproduktion in 2000 by Franziska Reck, the company has mainly been developing and producing documentary, documentary-feature and experimental films for cinema and television.

Always searching for new ideas, always transcending limitations, RECK Filmproduktion stands for – and features – interest in the wide variety of lifestyles and the diverse forms in which people express themselves, as well as the fascination of images – whether documentary, staged or experimental in nature. In the centre of the search are human encounters, images depicting what happens when different cultures encounter one another. Each film is one of a kind – unique, distinctive and unmistakable - and thus receives special, individual attention and treatment.

Its award-winning productions include **Against all Odds** (Anka Schmid 2011), **Sira – Songs of the Crescent Moon** (Sandra Gysi & Ahmed Abdel Mohsen 2011) **Bödälä – Dance the Rhythm** (Gitta Gsell 2010), **Namibia Crossings** (Peter Liechti 2004), **Dieter Roth** (Edith Jud 2003) and the experimental film **Terra Incognita** (Peter Volkart 2005).