



# LAKE TAHOE

(¿Te acuerdas de Lake Tahoe?)  
Directed by Fernando Eimbcke

“Sweet... Carefully crafted.” –Deborah Young, *Hollywood Reporter*

“Moving... Eimbcke is a master of tone.” – Lee Marshall, *Screen Daily*



**Mexico / 2008 / Spanish with English subtitles / 81 mins.  
/ 35mm / Color / 1:2.35 /Dolby SRD**

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## SYNOPSIS

*"Death exists, not as the opposite but as a part of life."*

Haruki Murakami, Norwegian Wood

Teenage Juan crashes his family's car into a telegraph pole on the outskirts of town, and then scours the streets searching for someone to help him fix it. His quest will bring him to Don Heber, an old paranoid mechanic whose only companion is Sica, his almost human boxer dog; to Lucía, a young mother who is convinced that her real place in life is as a lead singer in a punk band, and to "The One who Knows", a teenage mechanic obsessed with martial arts and Kung Fu philosophy. The absurd and bewildering worlds of these characters drag Juan into a one day journey in which he will come to accept what he was escaping from in the first place--an event both as natural and inexplicable as a loved one's death.

## FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

Winner – Alfred Bauer Prize and FIPRESCI Award – **Berlin Int'l FF**

Nominated – Golden Berlin Bear – **Berlin Int'l FF**

Winner – Mayahuel Award, Best Director – **Guadalajara Mexican FF**

Winner – Special Jury Prize – **Transylvania Int'l FF**

Showcased – **Cannes FF**

Official Selection – **San Sebastian FF, Karlovy Vary FF, Helsinki Int'l FF, AFI Film Festival**

## DIRECTOR'S AND WRITER'S STATEMENTS

*A few months after my father's death, I crashed the only car we had in the family. I disagree with my mother's thought that this was just a simple accident. **Lake Tahoe** is a film that was born as an attempt to understand the reasons that pushed me to commit such an act, such an absurd and profoundly human act.*

**Fernando Eimbcke**

*When my own mother died I looked around me: hours kept their pass, children kept their laughs, dogs kept their barks. And yet, the world was not the same anymore.*

*The most common little things were now astounding.*

*How could that be, that everything had changed so much, and at the same time, that nothing had changed?*

*Reality became unexplainable.*

**Paula Markovitch**

## ***Interview with Fernando Eimbcke***

“I will always prefer a well made piece of bread over a three-level fancy cake, with lots of icing and stuffed with fruits and decorations”. Fernando Eimbcke uses this comparison as a way to explain that ***Lake Tahoe***, his second feature film, is an “artisan movie” and not an industrial one. “My searching”, says Eimbcke, “is to make film in the purest state: to put together one image after another and give them all a meaning”.

In January 2008, four years after presenting ***DuckSeason***, a first feature which received more than twenty Mexican and international awards, Eimbcke is finishing the last details of ***Lake Tahoe***, selected to compete in the Official Section of the 58th Berlin International Film Festival.

### ***The main theme of this film is loss, right?***

The theme is *escape*. Sometimes we want to escape reality, but sooner or later we finish confronting the whole truth. Myself, for example: when my father died, I passed through a very long denying process —and I’m talking of several years here— until I was able to accept the fact. In this sense, the story depicted in this movie has a strong autobiographical element. Just as Juan, the character in screen, I took out the only car our family had and crashed it. What was going on into my head at that moment? Was I gambling with life? I still don’t know, but what I really know is that I was escaping from something. Juan is on the run almost the entire movie: he runs away from the mechanic, from David, from Lucía, and from his own house, until the moment he is able to cry and express his true feelings. Then he can return home.

### ***How was the script born?***

After the screening of ***Duck season*** in Cannes, I wrote a first treatment called “Revolutions per Minute” or RPM. It was a story about a youngster that goes to a party and loses there The Beatles’ *Abbey Road* LP, a very important record for his father. Then he starts a search, visiting all the guests that went to that party. Along the way, many characters appear, but at the end, he recovers the record, goes home, and listens to it with his brother.

I talked about this story with Paula Markovitch, co-writer of the script. We turned it around once or twice and, because we suffered the loss of our fathers at an early age, we decided to add the theme of death. Two months later we finished the first script version. It was a very complicated process; the truth is that I was very scared at the idea of confronting my own father’s demise, so, after the first version was ready, I spent more than two years rewriting and changing the script, until we got the final version, which, by the way, ended up being almost identical to that first version.

***Excepting for Héctor Herrera (Don Heber), you chose to work with non professional actors. Do you follow a special method with them?***

There was just one script reading session prior to shooting. During the shooting, we would, at night, give the actors the next day's scenes; they would then take them and study them, and the next morning we would plan the takes with the cinematographer. Then we would make some rehearsals, and proceed to shoot until we got what we wanted.

***What kind of instructions did you give to a non professional actor, or "model", as Robert Bresson calls them, before you film a scene?***

I give them movement instructions, such as "take that tape recorder, switch it on and sing as you would do in any normal day". Indeed, we work a lot with body language, but I tell them not to act. There's something that the camera always gets but you can't see. And you have to trust that "something"; you simply have to let that "model" be. As director, I have the responsibility of giving a meaning to the things they do. I learn and I adapt myself to what they are.

***The scene where Juan cries is the story's climatic point. How did you dramatize when you have a "non-actor" in front of the camera?***

In that particular scene, Diego Cataño, who indeed is a "non-actor", effectively had to dramatize. And the final result was very good. We talked, had some words with him, and we reached such a level of concentration that we made the scene in two takes. That's the level of focus I aspire as a director! There was true magic in that scene.

***Is Don Heber's dog named Sica as a reference to Vittorio De Sica?***

Yes, it's a little homage. And Don Heber is inspired in Humberto D, because of the old man's relationship with his dog.

***Why is the story located in Puerto Progreso, Yucatán?***

When I wrote the script, the original location was Toluca, an aggressive industrial town very close to Mexico City. I liked that, but, after some talks with the cinematographer Alexis Zabé, we started to search for locations all across Mexico, from the North to the extreme South, and Yucatán. In Progreso, thanks to Alexis' vision, we saw that life and death go hand by hand--the place is an industrial harbor that's full of activity in summer, but it's desolated during almost the rest of the year. You can see crumbling walls, punished by the sea breeze, but you can also watch exuberant vegetation all over the place. Besides, the Yucatán peninsula is flat, and the film always maintains a horizontal line in which the main character goes by.

***The camera movement is something to mention: static frames, open takes...***

I call it a *voyeuristic camera*. The static, open take lets you watch all that's happening in frame, from a branch in a tree that the wind moves to a bird that passes on and, of course, the character's actions. It responds to a special narrative of the drama. The main character is alone: he looks small and is vulnerable, a lost being that is running away from something. We took a distance from him from the very first scene, and we maintain it along the entire movie. When we showed this film to Alejandro González Iñárritu, he said that it was like a sustained musical note. That's why ***Lake Tahoe*** doesn't bring an instantaneous emotion to the viewer; it's at the end when the questions emerge. At first we see a young man obsessed in fixing a car, and, apparently, the story is based in this character that wants to get his vehicle running again, but as the film goes on, we find out that the automobile is the least important thing; that this youngster has to fix something a lot more important in his life.

***And the fades to black?***

They came up as an accident. From the beginning, we decided to use only photochemical processes, nothing digital. And in this process, when you do a *fade to black*, you get spots in the previous and following scenes. Then, Alexis Zabé and I concluded that the best was to do a direct cut to black. So, already in the editing room, we used blacks as a narrative resource, and sometimes, even as a dramatic one, as a silence or an imaginary frame.

***What's the cause of this refusal to use a digital process?***

In first place, because using 35mm film asks for much more rigor during shootings, and second, for aesthetic considerations. In ***Duck Season*** we used digital processes in postproduction, and the final result left us unsatisfied. I strongly dislike the way it looks on screen. Film looks a lot better. We didn't use artificial illumination; all you see is natural light, and, as you know, not using any artificial light poses a greater challenge for the cinematographer, especially at the night scenes, but Alexis Zabé was up to it.

***And what about music?***

I am a music lover, and I think that music must have a special place in movies. The thing is to build a musical rhythm in the soundtrack, from an almost imperceptible sound as the passing of wind, to the full extent of dialogues. The challenge is to create a musical structure with all this elements, so you can work without music in the form of a song. This comes from Robert Bresson, who constructed his soundtracks with the sonorous elements of the environment in which his film took place, instead of music itself.

***Do you consider yourself a purist?***

I try to make films the most honest way I can, and I consider myself an independent filmmaker. What I really look at, and it's a thing that can take me years to achieve, is to make cinema in pure form, a cinema in which the most important thing is the final meaning you get from putting together one image after another, and so on. That's my real searching: to get back to basics and get full advantage of the real foundations and elements of cinema. When you scrap all the things that are superfluous, then you can concentrate in the story you're telling and in what's happening to your characters.

***You have formed a very solid and compact workgroup. That is fundamental in getting things well done...***

The most important thing is that we work together as a team; producers, cinematographer, editor, all of us. We are fully committed to a project, and all of them are true artists. Finally, we do not make industrial cinema, but artisan cinema, so everybody involved is an important part of the creative process.

***Finally, why did you name your film **Lake Tahoe**?***

The title is only an alibi, some kind of fetish for the main character. It's a car sticker without any understandable importance, except that it makes him remember his father, and that's its importance. I haven't ever been in Lake Tahoe.

## **Interview with Diego Cataño**

### ***How did Fernando Eimbcke contact you for this project?***

After *Temporada de patos (Duck season)*, we lost each other's trace for a while, although we did maintain some kind of contact, because we became good friends, but I suppose we were taking care of our own business. I thought Fernando didn't have the intention of doing another film with any of the past cast members, but the truth is that I was very excited over the idea of working with him again. I was on a trip to Oaxaca, and when I got back I found a message from Fernando. I talked to him and he proposed making a second movie together. I told him yes and he responded "very well, in that case we're going to Yucatán tomorrow". So two days later we were shooting scenes in Progreso.

### ***Did you know something about the film?***

I didn't even know what the story went about! We made a single script reading session and that's the only time we saw the script in the whole shooting.

### ***You have said that you're not an actor. Is that correct?***

In some way, not being a professional one is another way of being an actor. For example: I didn't have anything in common with Moko, the character I played in *Duck Season*, so what I did was incarnate him. In *Lake Tahoe*, after discussing the subject with Fernando Eimbcke, we arrived to the same conclusion: "At this moment I'm Diego, but I am going to incarnate a character named Juan, who lives in a very different reality than mine". I don't have any dramatic training or anything like that, but, to some extent, I do consider myself an actor.

### ***How was a typical shooting day?***

We got up at 5:30 am, had a yoga session with an instructor, a quick breakfast, and went to work all day, until nighttime came.

### ***What kind of instructions did you receive from Fernando?***

Body language is very important to him: hands movements, physical posture, things like that, so basically he gave me those kinds of instructions. Speaking of myself, I can tell you that I became the character, or at least I tried to. If Juan has lost his dad, I tried to imagine how you feel when that happens, and then I tried to live it.



***How do you define Juan?***

Juan is a character that gets to grow beyond his father's death and beyond the people who surrounds him. Juan lives a complete transformation process, and that's the most important thing.

***What's the scene of **Lake Tahoe** that you will never forget?***

I liked a lot doing the night scene with Lucía, when we smoke a joint and Juan cries. It was quite a challenge, because I knew that in this particular scene I was going to really act. But the truth is that it was a cathartic moment. Fernando said "action!" and then something very strong happened, something that I had never experienced before. I believe that the scene is perfect.

***You are eighteen years old, so what you're up to?***

That's my actual dilemma: what to do? Study to become an actor? But, what does it mean to be an actor? I don't believe much in schools, but I'm willing to give it a try. I do believe in the "model" figure created by Robert Bresson. I'm interested in writing, reading history books, traveling and knowing many places. That's the kind of education that I want.

Right now, I'm enjoying my eighteen years! I put together circus acts, juggling and contact jogging. And I write a lot. Writing is the thing I like the best. I can tell you that my main activity is writing.

***What kind of writing?***

I'm actually working in my third novel, which is called *The Invisible Lip*, and I have just finished the second version of a script I made with my cousin in Paris.

## DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

### Fernando Eimbcke, Director and Co-writer

Born in Mexico City in 1970, Fernando Eimbcke completed his cinematography studies in 1996 at the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos of the National University, Mexico. His work includes several short films and music videos.

In 2004, he wrote and directed his first feature film *Temporada de patos* (***Duck season***), which was selected in the 43rd Critics' Week in Cannes 2004, and in nearly 90 international festivals.

Fernando Eimbcke co-wrote with Paula Markovitch the script for *Lake Tahoe*.

### Filmography and Awards

2008 ***Lake Tahoe*** (*Te acuerdas de Lake Tahoe?*)  
Selected for the Berlin 2008 Official Competition Program.  
Sundance-NHK Filmmakers Award 2006 for Latin America.  
Script developed with the assistance of the Sundance Screenwriters Lab.

2005 ***Perro que ladra*** (*Dog that barks*) (short)  
***Adiós a las trampas*** (*Goodbye to the traps*) (short)

2004 ***Temporada de patos*** (*Duck season*)  
Selected in the 43rd Cannes Critics Week (2004) and Official Selection in the festivals of Toronto, Edinburgh, Munich, Karlovy Vary, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bangkok, San Francisco, Palm Springs, among others.

Winner of 11 Arieles, awards bestowed by the Academia Mexicana de Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas, including Best Feature Film, Best Screenplay and Best Director.

Winner of 7 Mayahueles at the 2004 Guadalajara International Film Festival, including Best Screenplay, Best Director and Best Feature Film, as well as the FIPRESCI and JVC prizes.

Prize for Best Director at the 45th International Festival of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Special Prize of the Jury at the Paris International Film Festival, France.

CinemAvvenire prize for Best Feature Film at the 40<sup>a</sup> Mostra Internazionale del Nuovo Cinema di Pesaro, Italy.

Special Prize of the Jury for Best Feature Film at AFI-Los Angeles International Film Festival, United States, 2004.

Tatú Tumpa Award for Best Film at the VII Festival Iberoamericano de Cine, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, 2005.

Prize for Best First Feature Film at the IX Encuentro Latinoamericano de Cine, Lima, Perú, 2005.

Prize for Best Latin American Film at the 2005 Mar de Plata Film Festival, Argentina, 2005.

Nominated for the Best Foreign Film at the 2006 Independent Spirit Awards, Santa Monica, United States.

2003 ***The look of love*** (*The look of love*) (short)

***No sea malito*** (*Don't be bad*) (short)

2002 ***La suerte de la fea... a la bonita no le importa*** (*Weightwatch*) (short)

1995 ***No todo es permanente*** (*Not everything is permanent*) (short documentary) (Nominated for Best Short Documentary, Academia Mexicana de Ciencias y Artes Cinematográficas)

1994 ***¿Perdón?*** (*Excuse me?*) (short)

1993 ***Disculpe las molestias*** (*Sorry for the inconvenience*) (short)

***Alcanzar una estrella*** (*Reaching a star*) (short documentary)

## SELECT ACTORS'/CREW FILMOGRAPHIES/AWARDS

### Actors

#### Diego Cataño-Juan

Born in 1990 in Mexico City, his first role was in the soap opera *El derecho de nacer* (*The right to be born*, 2000). A year later, he acted in the Mexican film *Zurdo* (*Left-handed*, 2003), directed by Carlos Salces. In 2004, he starred in *Temporada de patos* (*Duck season*), the first feature of Mexican director Fernando Eimbcke. For his performance in this film Diego Cataño was nominated as Best Actor at the 2005 MTV Movie Awards.

His next work was as the main character of the short film *Ver llover* (*Watching it rain*, 2006), directed by Elisa Miller, which won the Golden Palm and Norman McLaren Award for Best Short Film at the 2007 Cannes Film Festival, as well as the Short Film Competition Award at the 2006 Morelia International Film Festival. In 2006, he starred in *Año uña* (*The year of the nail*), the first feature of director Jonás Cuarón, which premiered at the XXII Guadalajara International Film Festival. He also participated in the first feature of director Rodrigo Plá, *La zona* (*The zone*, 2007) and had the main role in Mr. Plá's second feature, *Desierto adentro* (*Desert inside*, 2008).

#### Héctor Herrera- Don Heber

Born in Mérida in 1934, this theater entrepreneur and actor has used the stage name *Cholo* for more than 37 years. Since 1970, he took over the reform of the theatrical scene in Yucatán. He gave life to the humble but astute *yucateco* everyman who denounces the politicians' dirty deeds and criticizes all social unfairness, in more than 100 productions, some of them with great local success. He has also worked in film and television. In 2005 he received the *Héctor Victoria Aguilar* medal, the highest distinction bestowed by the State Congress.

#### Daniela Valentine- Lucía

Born in 1985 in Mexico City, she has been a singer since a tender age. During the last four years, she has developed her craft in the worlds of street performance, urban art and digital photography. Her most important artistic accomplishments have been *Guerrilla* and *The City Loves You*.

Daniela has collaborated in some thematic showings in Mexican art galleries and was part of the Street Art movement in Mexico City. In the summer of 2007, costume designer and make up artist Mariana Watson mentioned her to

Fernando Eimbcke as a possible choice for the role of Lucía in **Lake Tahoe**, film that marked her debut as an actress.

### **Juan Carlos Lara- David**

Born in 1988 in Mérida, Yucatán, Juan Carlos Lara is a teacher of classical dance and a reggae singer since 2005. He specially likes percussion and juggling with batons and fire sticks. He is something of a local figure, followed by many youngsters who see him as a mentor. At the time of his participation in the casting for **Lake Tahoe**, he worked as a parking attendant in Mérida, Yucatán.

### **Yemil Sefami-Joaquín**

Born in Mexico City in 1997, he's the son of actor José Sefami and ballet dancer and teacher Carmen Vizcaíno. He currently studies in primary school and is a Tae Kwon Do red belt (just prior to black). He also plays soccer in the *Pumitas* team, the football club of the National University of Mexico.

## **Crew**

### **Paula Markovitch, Co-writer**

Born in Capital Federal, Argentina, in 1968. As a screenwriter for cinema, her most important works are **Lake Tahoe** (co-written with Fernando Eimbcke), **Temporada de patos** (*Duck season*), in which she collaborated in the script, **Dos abrazos** (*Two hugs*), directed by Enrique Begné, **Elisa antes del fin del mundo** (*Elisa before the end of the world*), directed by Juan Antonio de la Riva, and **Sin remitente** (*Without remittent*), directed by Carlos Carrera. She has written and directed the short films **Periférico** (*Perriferico*, 1999) and **Música de ambulancia** (*Ambulance music*, 2006).

### **Alexis Zabé, Director of Photography**

Born in México City, where he studied cinematography at the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos. He started his professional career at an animation and SFX studio. As Director of Photography, he has collaborated on many documentaries, advertising spots and musical videos.

Alexis Zabé has also made audiovisual contributions for theater and video installations that have been exhibited worldwide in museums and art galleries. In 2003, he was the cinematographer for **Temporada de patos** (*Duck season*) and in 2006, for **Luz silenciosa** (*Silent light*), directed by Carlos Reygadas, winner of the Jury Prize in the 2007 Cannes Film Festival.

### **Christian Valdelièvre, Producer**

Has been involved in movie production since 1998. Previously, he was an investment banker at JPMorgan (1983-2001), as a Managing Director. He actively participated in the creation of the theater exhibition company Cinemex. He was the originator and co-producer of ***Sexo, pudor y lágrimas*** (*Sex, shame and tears*), directed by Antonio Serrano in 1999. This film became the largest ticket seller in the history of Mexican cinema. He is the founding partner and majority owner of Lulú Producciones and Titán Producciones.

In 2004, he produced ***Temporada de patos*** (*Duck season*).

Christian Valdelièvre also co-produced ***La zona*** (*The zone*), directed by Rodrigo Plá, film that won the Golden Lion prize for Best First Feature at the Venice Film Festival in 2007, and the FIPRESCI prize at the Toronto Film Festival.

### **Jaime Bernardo Ramos, Executive Producer**

Born in México City in 1972, he studied photography at the Escuela Activa de Fotografía, dramatic arts at Casa del Teatro, and cinematography at the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos. His first works in cinema were as Art Coordinator of ***Rito terminal*** (*Terminal rite*), first feature film of Óscar Urrutia, and ***Un mundo raro*** (*A weird world*), directed by Armando Casas.

He made the art design of ***Aro Tolbukhin: En la mente del asesino*** (*Aro Tolbukhin: In the mind of the killer*), winner of an Ariel award for this precise category. In 2003, he co-founded Cinepantera, in association with Fernando Eimbcke and Christian Valdelièvre. That same year he made his debut as a producer with ***Temporada de patos*** (*Duck season*). In 2005 he produced ***Sólo Dios sabe*** (*Only god knows*), directed by Carlos Bolado and starring Diego Luna.

## **Credits**

### **Crew**

Directed By: Fernando Eimbcke

Scenario/ Written By: Fernando Eimbcke and Paula Markovitch

Produced By: Christian Valdelièvre

Executive Producer: Jaime Bernardo Ramos

Director of Photography: Alexis Zabé

Edited By: Mariana Rodríguez

Art Director: Diana Quiroz

Casting: Alejandro Caballero

Sound Designer: Lena Esquenazi

Sound Mixer: Antonio Diego

Costume Design and Make Up: Mariana Watson

Post Production: Brad Goodman, Los Angeles  
Fernando Fernández de Córdoba

### **Cast**

Juan Diego Cataño

Don Heber Hector Herrera

Lucía Daniela Valentine

David Juan Carlos Lara

Joaquín Yemil Sefami