

NEWHARD ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS
A BRADLEY SMITH PRODUCTION
OF A FILM BY ZACH WEINTRAUB

THE INTERNATIONAL SIGN FOR CHOKING



UNRATED.COLOR.80MIN



BAFICI | INDIELISBOA | MARYLAND | BAMCINEMAFEST | STARZ DENVER | AFI FEST



The International Sign for Choking depicts the day-to-day encounters of Josh, a would-be expatriate from the US living in Buenos Aires for the second time. While his primary purpose seems to be the production of a vaguely defined video project, he devotes more of his time to tracking down a mysteriously absent ex-girlfriend. Frustrated by continual failure, Josh finds himself the perpetrator of a series of small yet uncharacteristic acts of deceit that ultimately place him in a low-key love triangle alongside Anna, his fellow N. American housemate, and Roger, a local musician.

SHORT
SYNOPSIS





"Upends expectations at every turn, from the defiantly nontouristic views of Buenos Aires to the tough, unsparing conclusions the story reaches about its adrift protagonist."

KEITH UHLICH TIME OUT NEW YORK



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

When I started pre-production on my first film - Bummer Summer - it was with little to no idea whether what I was doing would result in a coherent, watchable movie. I felt disadvantaged to be undertaking something so huge with so little experience, but I also felt excited. For me, every new filmmaking endeavor needs to involve some aspect of experimentation, rather than the machine-like execution of some proven formula. The International Sign for Choking is no exception.

Even following the success of Bummer Summer, I felt no inclination to simply repeat the process. Having developed a distinct style and method of working, I was eager to learn how I might translate this style and method into a more tonally dynamic and emotionally complex movie. Most exciting and challenging of all, I was eager to do it in a foreign setting.

In 2008, I spent five months living and studying in Buenos Aires, Argentina. During this time I became acquainted with and attracted to the city and the rhythm of day-to-day life therein. For me, the most interesting experimental aspect of making The International Sign for Choking was exploring how Argentine idiosyncrasies are transformed via the lens of a North American protagonist, and conversely, how this protagonist (a very distinctly North American young person) is transformed within an Argentine context. International co-productions have always fascinated me and I'm thrilled to have been involved in one of my own.

Regarding the specific events of the film, its plot is a sort of amalgam of the situations and emotions that I faced personally while living in Argentina and the hypothetical experience that I might have if I were to return in the protagonist's place. Young adulthood is frequently a difficult time, which I've found can be amplified by the alienating effects of an unfamiliar setting. Thus, it was my principal aim to explore the interior landscape of a young man so unsatisfied that he has fled ten thousand miles beyond his comfort zone in search of something that he himself seems unable to define.

Sincerely,
Zach Weintraub

“Like a micro-budget version of a Rohmer film, Weintraub focuses on the details of a series of interpersonal relationships, only ever revealing the tip of the emotional iceberg. Avoiding even the slightest trace of exoticism, the film could have been shot anywhere in the world. Far from problematic, this peculiar characteristic lends the film universality, in spite of its localized Spanish, porteño bars, and images of the palm forest in Colón. Plenty of muted humor compliments the successful choice of a restrained tone, making this without a doubt the kindest film offered in competition [at BAFICI] thus far. Just as in real life, kindness in the cinema can also be quite welcome.”

DIEGO BRODERSON PAGINA/12

(ARGENTINA)

“Things sort of just happen in ‘The International Sign for Choking,’ whose course is determined more by chance occurrences than by a determined narrative line. Though never indulging in any explicit homage, Weintraub has made something of a hipster Ozu film out of his fleecy material, and as with Ozu, the theme of loss is paramount. The unusual casting of two filmmakers as co-leads works remarkably well. The pair's shifts from initial awkwardness to attraction to dissolution occur naturally and almost invisibly, the characters' moment-to-moment interaction achieving a style quite distinct from that of mumblecore.”

ROBERT KOHLER VARIETY

“For levity's sake (in the melancholic vein), one could tap North American Zach Weintraub's cheekily titled *The International Sign for Choking*, which faithfully conjures the director's demographic of expatriated youth with a rather sincere sense of irony, with its backdrop of pastel wallpaper providing the canvas to frame alienated and lovelorn roommates adrift in Buenos Aires (mercifully, no tango shows or Caminito). It's a Rohmeresque film for a generation inclined to argue about the distinguishing suffix, in which the actor-director displays a lightness of touch before as well as behind the camera.”

JAY KUEHNER CINEMA SCOPE





KEY BIOGRAPHIES

WRITER/DIRECTOR/JOSH

Zach Weintraub studied film at New York University before moving back to his hometown (Olympia, WA) to write and direct *Bummer Summer*, his micro-budget directorial debut. He co-founded Newhard Entertainment alongside frequent collaborator Nandan Rao. He wrote and directed his second film, *The International Sign for Choking*, in Argentina.

ANNA

Sophia Takal studied film at Vassar College and Barnard College, Columbia University. She served as producer, editor, and star of the feature film *Gabi on the Roof* in July for which she won the Best Actress award at the Brooklyn Film Festival in 2010. *Green*, her first feature as writer/director, premiered at SXSW in 2011 where it won the Chicken & Egg Award. Sophia was named one of *Filmmaker Magazine's 25 New Faces of Film* in 2011.

CINEMATOGRAPHER

Nandan Rao studied film alongside Zach at New York University. Their first collaboration, *Bummer Summer*, was also his first feature film as cinematographer. Since then he has shot a number of feature films, most notably Sophia's award-winning *Green*. Nandan also wrote, directed, shot, and produced the upcoming feature film *The Men of Dodge City* in Detroit.



FULL CAST & CREW

PRINCIPLE CAST (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

Josh – Zach Weintraub
Barbara – Barbara Cameron
Brooke – Brooke Bundy
Anna – Sophia Takal
Xime – Ximena Brun
Zeki – Ezequiel Etcheverry
Man in Office – Manuel Garcia
Baby Vicente – Vicente Etcheverry
Martina's Friend – Camila Pérez
Windmill Tour Guide – Juan Carlos Buet
Roger – Roger Delahaye

ROWDY YANKEES

Bradley Smith
Kevin Vaughn
Kenneth Young
Kendall Jarel Lestrade
Cait Artiaga

SKATERS

Mariano Blanco
Jonathan Dufour
Javier Abril Rotger

OLGA (Roger's Band)

Flor Zavadviker
Luciano Lasca
Roger Delahaye

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

T. Newhard

PRODUCER/SOUND RECORDIST

Bradley Smith

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

Martín Crespo
Manuel García

WRITER/DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Zach Weintraub

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY/COLORIST

Nandan Rao

SOUND EDITOR

Perry Robertson

VISUAL EFFECTS

J.D. Amato

ADDITIONAL SOUND RECORDIST

Germán Fernandez

TITLE DESIGN

Dustin Wickham

MUSIC

"Cascadia" Written/Performed by
Ernesto Cárcamo

"Nuestros Colores" Written/Performed by
OLGA

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