

Interview: Director Sebastián Silva Delivers a ‘Nasty Baby’

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on October 30, 2015 - 2:23pm

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CHICAGO – “Nasty Baby” is a family film, with a family that consists of a gay/mixed race couple, and their best girlfriend who wants to have a baby with them. This unconventionality is made less remarkable simply because the characters are all motivated by their own fragile egos – which sometimes is good, and sometimes not so much.

The director is Sebastián Silva, who also wrote the screenplay and plays a lead role as Freddy, part of the gay couple. His partner is Mo (Turide Adebimpe), and the couple’s baby maker is Polly, portrayed exquisitely by Kristin Wiig. Their determination, fueled by Polly’s biological clock, creates a tense atmosphere that leads to a troubling situation. It is, however, an authentic slice of life, and wickedly realized by the acting and production team.



Kristen Wiig and Sebastián Silva in ‘Nasty Baby’

Photo credit: The Orchard

Sebastián Silva was born in Chile, and is a veteran of six feature films, including “The Maid” (2009) and “Magic Magic” (2013). He spoke to HollywoodChicago.com before participating in a Q&A on Friday, October 30th, at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago.

HollywoodChicago.com: What is remarkable about your film is that all the characters are flawed in their own ways. What statement were you trying to make regarding the human condition and our own motivations?

Sebastián Silva: You’re right, none of them are heroes. I wanted to make those flaws visible. Freddy is very selfish, he doesn’t create comfort in the situation they’re in. Polly is pushy and desperate, and Mo is kind of a pushover. I think people identify more with characters that have flaws, it makes them more like regular people. The motivations that the three have for starting a family are also not very convincing to me. For example, Freddy wants the baby to look like him, which seems immature.

HollywoodChicago.com: There is a lot of fear in the film. In your opinion, how does fear both motivate and destroy us, in the context of the

film?

Silva: Yes, the ways to get over fear are love, trust or faith. But another way, more damaging, is to become the source of fear yourself. If you become the source, then you are the one people are afraid of – that is where violence finds its home.

It's like the situation currently with the police. I'm scared of them, and can't act human around them, because lately they've been generating a circumstance of fear. Because of what had been happening, they seem to want to be bigger and more fearful. They're scared as well, but they are also becoming the source of fear themselves.

HollywoodChicago.com: The subjectiveness of art is a theme, with egos in that world on full display. What element of creating art also brings out the worst in human behavior, again in the context of the film?

Silva: It's the Messiah Complex. I think artists sometimes see themselves as Jesus. And despite all praise their way, it never is enough. They become delusional about their importance, and in that delusion feel as if they have to guide humanity toward their 'belly button.'

HollywoodChicago.com: You brought out a different side of Kristen Wiig, in a breakthrough performance. What did she understand about the character that you wrote, that you think made the part unique to her?

Silva: To be honest with you, I think characters are not as important as the manipulative moral experiment within the film. I think any of the main characters are remarkable. Kristen wasn't tempted by Polly as a character, as in 'this is how I should play her to be memorable.' I don't think the audience will remember 'Nasty Baby' for the characters, but rather how it makes them feel morally.

Having said that, I just asked Kristen to be herself. I am sort of outside mainstream media, so I hadn't really heard of her before I cast her. When I saw her work, I thought she was hilarious, and in the comedy I thought that she was really smart, and she proved that when I met her. We became friends very quickly. That served both our roles, and the relationship we had in the film.



Turide Adebimpe and Kristen Wiig in 'Nasty Baby'

Photo credit: The Orchard

HollywoodChicago.com: Your character is the lead. How does directing yourself in a script you wrote make it both easier and harder on set to make him work?

Silva: It made it difficult in a time sense. Because we didn't have a lot of time to produce the film, I didn't watch much playback when I was in a scene, but I will say that being in the scene made it unnecessary to watch anything. I could feel the truth and veracity of a scene from within it, and whether it was real or unreal. There was a vague sense when something was working or not. We were essentially playing ourselves, and it became vital in knowing how to react.

HollywoodChicago.com: The older gay gentleman character represented an interesting contrast. His steeliness in a crisis spoke to a past as a survivor, one who once had his back to the wall. Were you making a statement about gay men in that generation through his character?

Silva: Yes, for sure. The character was based on my neighbor, who also was in an interracial relationship. The privileges that the gay community have today totally amaze men of his generation. They are proud, but sometimes confused. I think through that older character we see that the life he couldn't have, he wants Freddy to have. That's why he gives him a hand near the end.

HollywoodChicago.com: As you evolve up the ladder as a filmmaker, what are the most valuable lessons you've learned, and which one was most helpful on 'Nasty Baby'?

Silva: This will sound corny, but I once collaborated with cinematographer Christopher Doyle [“Hero”] on ‘Magic Magic.’ We were struggling a bit, and things weren’t getting done. So he came up to me and said, ‘In movies, and in art in general, we do what we can, and that’s not always what we want.’ It was so true. I’ve learned that being adaptable and spontaneous in decision making is really the way to go, both in life and the movies.

If an actor can’t give me what I want, and what I think I really needed for a scene, but they still can’t do it, I will change what they need to give me until it works. I don’t do 25 takes, I know other directors where that works for them, but I’m not one of them. I’d rather co-direct with real life, if that makes any sense. [laughs]

HollywoodChicago.com: What do you think ‘First World’ societies need to learn most about the cycle of life and death depicted in ‘Nasty Baby’?

Silva: There are couple of things that people really need to come to terms with, and one of them is death. There is a fear of death, which turns into violence, protectiveness and territorialism. The fear of death brings out the worst in people, and coming to terms with our own mortality is very important.

The other thing that First World people need to come to terms with – especially in America – is genitals. This is a must. People in America are terrified of p*ssies and d*cks. If I were the President, I’d build a huge sculpture in every state of those two vital parts, where people could touch them, hug them, lick them and take selfies. Honestly, the fear of genitalia in this country is amazing, and I cannot understand it.

HollywoodChicago.com: Well, we did build one d*ck. It’s called the Washington Monument.

Silva: [Laughs] You’re right!

Sebastián Silva and Kristen Wiig will appear on behalf of “Nasty Baby” in Chicago on October 30th and 31st, 2015, at the Music Box Theatre. [Click here](#) [15] for details. “Nasty Baby” releases through Video-on-Demand on October 30th, and at select theaters. See listings for theaters, show times and digital download providers. Featuring Sebastián Silva, Kristen Wiig, Turide Adebimpe, Reg E. Cathey and Mark Margolis. Written and directed by Sebastián Silva. Rated “R”



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By [PATRICK McDONALD](#) [17]
Writer, Editorial Coordinator
HollywoodChicago.com
pat@hollywoodchicago.com [16]

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Source URL (retrieved on Apr 23 2024 - 7:46pm):

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