



—SLEEPLESS CITY (CIUDAD SIN SUEÑO)



64^e SEMAINE
DE LA CRITIQUE
CANNES 2025

A Film by Guillermo Galoe

PRESSKIT



— SLEEPLESS CITY (CIUDAD SIN SUEÑO)

97 MIN

SPAIN, FRANCE

2025

1.66

DOLBY 5.1

SPANISH, FRENCH

SCREENINGS IN CANNES

FRI. MAY 16th, 2:00 PM @ OLYMPIA 8
(Market-Secret)

SUN. MAY 18th, 4:15 PM @ OLYMPIA 4
(Market-Secret)

MON. MAY 19th, 11:30 AM @ ESPACE MIRAMAR
(Official)

MON. MAY 19th, 5:45 PM @ ESPACE MIRAMAR
(World Premiere)

TUE. MAY 20th, 8:45 AM @ ESPACE MIRAMAR
(Official)

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— SYNOPSIS

Toni, a 15-year-old Roma boy, lives in the largest illegal settlement in Europe, on the outskirts of Madrid. Proud to belong to his family of scrap metal dealers, he follows his grandfather everywhere. But as demolitions move closer and closer to their plot, and his grandfather is willing to do anything to stay, Toni will have to choose what to let go and what to sacrifice.



A CONVERSATION WITH GUILLERMO GALOE



How would you describe *Sleepless City* in a few words?

The film is born from an image: a child claims his childhood as he watches it fade away, vanishing into the night. The characters in the film face the loss of a way of life, the fading of a world that, despite having been completely displaced, with pride and dignity upholds its values, its myths, sometimes in a nearly quixotic manner. These are characters out of time, invisible to the eyes of an anxiously capitalist and globalized society, yet closely observing it. The film intimately portrays these people, which do have names and faces—people who are either not represented in images or are often portrayed with stigma. And it does so through Toni's eyes, whose gaze still retains the magic of childhood, a place for legends and ghosts, a place free of judgment where everything is still possible.

Is it a continuation of your short film *Even Though It's Night*?

I wouldn't call it a continuation of '*Even Though It's Night*', but rather the result of a life, personal and cinematic process—one in which the short film also plays a part—that has unfolded over six years, almost without pause. The film is the fruit of a relationship I built through cinema with a community just ten minutes from my home: La Cañada Real, on the outskirts of Madrid. After decades of growing completely on the margins of society, ignored by almost everyone, this place is now facing dismantlement and eviction.

When I felt I was going to make a film there, and when I imagined what it could be like, I understood that I was making a film with the community, not about the community. At first, I was simply spending time there, getting to know families, sharing time and life. I began running filmmaking workshops with kids and teens making short films on mobile phones.

I always made it clear that I had the idea of making a feature film, but I didn't take out a camera until two years in—when I felt there was enough trust, and when I felt it wouldn't be violent for the community to place themselves in front of one. I shot quite a bit of material, documenting the passage of time, especially from late 2020 onwards, when the power supply was cut off and families began living in darkness, by the light of fire and generators, and still today, five years later, families live without electricity. This footage became like filmic notes for the scriptwriting process. In the meantime, I decided to make a short film where I could begin testing some of the artistic elements I wanted to explore. It also served as a way for the community to make the filmmaking process their own. After all of that, the feature film followed.

Throughout all this time, something beautiful happened: filmmaking became a part of everyday life for the families there. Making films became something normal, almost routine, in La Cañada. If there's a way to uproot, dismantle, and fragment a community—or an entire society—it's by denying them access to culture. Along with electricity, cultural spaces have also been erased from La Cañada Real. Cinema gradually filled that cultural void.

How did the idea of following young Toni come about?

I remember when I first met Toni: he was fixing his bike outside his house. We were doing some casting tests for the short film with a few of his neighbors, who told me they'd feel more comfortable doing it with a friend so they introduced me to him. When we proposed the idea, I was surprised by how naturally and bravely he jumped in without hesitation. He was a kid hungry for adventure. He ended up becoming the protagonist of the short, and he turned out to be an incredibly gifted natural actor.

While writing the feature, I always pictured a lead character who was still deeply rooted in childhood, and the script was charged with that energy. But of course, by the time we were ready to shoot the feature, Toni had grown. Grown just enough to carry a different energy than the one in the script. He was entering the hazy space of adolescence, and we were about to embark on several intense weeks of filming. It was a tricky moment. We had to weigh many things, and in the end, I made the decision based on feeling. It had to be him not just because he could carry the film, but because we'd become friends and both of us wanted to make this film together.

We adapted the script for Toni at the last moment, just before shooting began, and I think it's one of the best decisions I've ever made.

Something I loved about the whole experience is the idea of feeling the passage of time through films—something that, in this case, is embodied in the face and body of the actor. Watching that short film, and now *Sleepless City*, I feel how Toni and I have grown together and how, through cinema, we've shared some of the most important years of our lives.

You wrote the screenplay yourself, what were the key stages in its development, and how did you go about selecting the actors around Toni ? What guided your casting choices?

I wrote the script together with Víctor Alonso-Berbel, a filmmaker and friend. The screenplay was a very evolving process that stretched out over six years. It changed in parallel with my relationship to La Cañada, and it also grew alongside me over time. In a constant interplay between reality and fiction—on paper and in life—we started writing from a place of distance from the world we were portraying. That distance gradually closed as we got to know the territory more intimately.

The script is entirely fictional. But of course, we wrote it based on the people I got to know during that long earlier period when I was sharing daily life there. The conflicts the characters go through, their emotions, their

ways of speaking, the things that happen, the legend Toni's grandmother tells—these are things I saw and heard there. And even though I reshaped them freely to build a fictional script, they either happened or could have happened.

The concept of Truth, generally makes me wary—but within a film, you can create a very powerful illusion of reality. The idea was to find, in such a specific place, a different perspective than the one usually built around it. We're used to seeing images of La Cañada and similar universes that supposedly show the "reality" of the neighborhood, but the people who live there don't feel represented by those images—and sometimes even feel harmed by them. So, even though this is a fiction film, it's tied to a very real and specific world.

Before we even got into rehearsals focused on the script, we did a lot of preparatory work around acting—games, physical exercises. Not only had they never done anything related to cinema or had any prior tools, but in some cases, they live in very difficult conditions, often working long physical days just to get by. So part of the process was about creating safe, healthy, and relaxed spaces, incorporating routines like meditation, physical and emotional preparation.

In terms of working with the actors, no one ever read a single line of the script. We built the scenes through rehearsals where we set the rules of the game—a framework inside which there was room to rework what we had written. With each person, the work was different, adapted to their personality, always trying not to stray too far from who they are in real life. In general, that *Bressonian* line worked really well: not burdening the actors with thought, but instead creating mechanisms and a rhythm where they could stop feeling self-conscious and work more from the physical.

There's also material in the film that was shot on a mobile phone, and that process was different. Toni, Bilal, and I would spend days alone in La Cañada, creating scenes—and even rewriting parts of the script as the film itself was being edited.

You've filmed again in La Cañada Real... How did you become interested in this place? I imagine there must be a long process of building trust before you can introduce a camera into such an environment...

Earlier I spoke about how my relationship with La Cañada was built, and how we managed to place a camera in front of the people who live there without creating violent or hierarchical dynamics.

I was drawn to that place for both political and aesthetic reasons.

Focusing on what happens at the margins has the potential to challenge this anxiously capitalist, centralist, and globalized society, which suffers from issues of identity and belonging. On one hand, there's a homogenizing trend that erases diversity and identity traits, and on the other, we fail to learn and continue perpetuating discrimination based on class, race, gender... which only makes the world's wounds bleed deeper. And if cinema has the

power to truly see where others merely look—to capture the invisible—then, as an art form, it can challenge society and help make it better. Without romanticizing what happens at the periphery, I sought to reclaim in the film that sense of community and belonging that reaffirms itself even in the most displaced environments. But what interests me is cinema that challenges—and provokes more inquiries than answers.

I wanted to portray all of that through the eyes of Toni, who is on the verge of becoming an adult, but whose gaze still holds the magic of childhood—free of judgment, where anything is still possible. A poetic gaze through which we dive into a raw and complex universe—populated by characters who could have stepped out of a noir or a western, yet portrayed not through the tropes of genre, but through skin and intimacy. Brought to life entirely by the people who actually live there. And there, on the farthest edge of my society, I found in the Roma community of Extremadura echoes of my grandparents' world—who walked the same



lands, hunted with the same dogs, and told the same legends.

Did you make any particular decisions as a director?

I was drawn to the idea of giving value to what vanishes—through the beauty and magic that any reality can hold, no matter how harsh it may be. And what’s inherent to cinema is precisely its capacity for magic and wonder—like the gaze of a child. The film, like Toni, cries out for freedom; it vibrates with the same energy as his eyes. To such an extent that it even incorporates its own filmic gesture: Toni films himself and his surroundings with a mobile phone. He creates images that are wild and free, as extreme as the place he lives in, and the colors explode on screen, inspired by the tales and legends he hears at home from his grandmothers. I wanted to give weight to the spoken word, to oral storytelling, to lore, and in working with the actors we made a point of preserving their way of speaking, with all its nuances and particularities. Aesthetically, we wanted to leave room to discover new, free images—and space for mystery—without drifting away from the characters or placing ourselves above them.

My working method is quite intuitive, as it’s deeply tied to the real world that unfolds before my senses, and to how I interact with it. I think my films so far are the result of a kind of exploration of the world that, like any meaningful journey, becomes introspection—a way of finding myself in the Other, and vice versa.

**Did you encounter any particular difficulties during the filming?
Do you have any anecdotes to share?**

If the natural state of films is that they don’t get made, this film was impossible to produce for many reasons, as I mentioned before. We faced huge difficulties in producing it, but I prefer to stay with what we’ve

accomplished. Without a doubt, it has been a rebirth for me as a filmmaker and as a person.

**What do you expect from this selection for the Competition at the Critics' Week?
Is Cannes a good platform for a film?**

‘*Sleepless City*’ is the result of six years of filmmaking alongside a community that exists at the farthest margins of society, and presenting the film at the Festival de Cannes—the center of world cinema—fills us with great satisfaction. I premiered my previous short films in the Official Selection in Competition, and in the Directors’ Fortnight, and what happened to those works afterward was beautiful. And now I am very happy to present my first feature film at *La Semaine de la Critique*. La Semaine is a unique place that has marked the beginning of many great filmmakers. From the moment of selection, I feel that the films, the filmmakers, and the teams are very well taken care of. It’s the perfect space at Cannes for this film’s voice to flourish.

BIOGRAPHY GUILLERMO GALOE

Born in Madrid, Spain, his works have premiered at Cannes, San Sebastián, IDFA, among other festivals, and have won two Goya awards. His short film ‘Aunque es de Noche’ (2023) premiered in the Festival de Cannes Official Selection, being nominated for the Short Film Palme d’Or, won the Goya for Best Short Fiction Film, and was part of the Official Selection at the César 2025. Also at the Festival de Cannes in 2023, he premiered his short film ‘As Gaivotas Cortam o Céu’ at the Quinzaine des Cinéastes. His short film ‘Lo-Tech Reality’ (2022), a result of his

collaboration with the Detroit techno collective Underground Resistance, continues its journey through international festivals and museums after premiering at Zinebi and Ann Arbor. His first fiction feature film ‘Sleepless City’ (2025) will have its World Premiere in Cannes at La Semaine de la Critique. In 2020, Guillermo received the prestigious Princess of Girona Award for Arts and Literature.



FILMOGRAPHY

GUILLERMO GALOE

2023	<i>Even Though It's Night</i> – Cannes Film Festival 2023 & Best Fiction Short Film at Goya Awards
2023	<i>Seagulls Cut the Sky</i> – Directors' Fortnight
2016	<i>Delicate Balance</i> – IDFA Audience Award & Goya Award for Best Documentary



CAST & CREW

Tonino	Antonio "Toni" Fernández Gabarre
Bilal	Bilal Sedraoui
Chule	Jesús "Chule" Fernández Silva
Felisa	Felisa Romero Molina
Pura	Pura Salazar
Paqui	Francisca Jiménez
Director	Guillermo Galoe
Screenplay	Guillermo Galoe, Víctor Alonso-Berbel
Director of Photography	Rui Poças
Editing	Victoria Lammers
Sound Edit	Barto Alcaine
Sound Mix	Antoine Bertucci, Vincent Arnardi
Art Director	Ana Mallo
Line Producer	Antonello Novellino
Costume Design	Iratxe Sanz
Hair & Makeup	Marta García
VFX	Justine Juarez Bellais
Effects Supervisor	Aránzazu Gaspar Alonso
1 st Assistant Director	Carlos "Charlie" Almagro Casado
Casting Director	Elena Saura

CAST & CREW

Color Grading	Caïque Da Souza
Production	Sintagma Films, Buena Pinta Media, Encanta Films, Bteam Prods, Ciudad sin sueño película AIE, Les Valseurs, Tournellovision
Producers	Marina García López, Marisa Fernández Armenteros, Manu Calvo, Alex Lafuente, Damien Megherbi, Justin Pechberty, Anne-Dominique Toussaint
Executive Producers	Marina García López, Marisa Fernández Armenteros, Manu Calvo, Alex Lafuente, David Casas Riesco, Justin Pechberty
Associated Producers	Inbar Horesh, Lara P. Camiña, Ania Jones, Rui Poças, Pedro González Kühn, Lina Badenes
Country	Spain, France
Spanish Distributor	BTeam Pictures
French Distributor	Pan Distribution
International Sales	Best Friend Forever

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