

## Sin Nombre

This is a tough, yet exhilarating film of escape as the fates bring together a Honduran teenage girl, with a dream of life in the US, and a young Mexican gang member, finally ready to flee his life of barren crime and violence. “Sin Nombre” (*Without a Name*) is told—in Spanish--featuring a group of non-actors in a gripping documentary style. The film is the stunning debut of a young (not yet 35) American director, Cary Fukunaga, and makes wholly personal and human our nation’s ongoing immigration dilemma.



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Paulina Gaitan (left) and Edgar Flores (right) star in writer/director Cary Joji Fukunaga's epic dramatic thriller SIN NOMBRE, a Focus Features release.

Photo credit: Eniac Martinez

El Casper, known as Willy, is a Mexican gang kid initiating an even younger boy, Smiley, into his gang, led by the brutal Li'l Mago. After a falling out with his leader, Willy accidentally kills him and stows away on a passing train traveling to the US. Among the illegal immigrants on it is the Honduran teenager Sayra, hoping to escape to New Jersey to live with relatives. Throughout the train ride, Sayra keeps approaching Willy, who has smuggled out

gang members in the past, knows the nuances of the journey, and has decided to leave the gang life. At a river crossing where the attendant can only cross one person at a time, Sayra makes it across into the US, but Willy is shot by Smiley who has been trailing him, highlighting the random nature of the immigrant experience.

Where Fukunaga, born in Oakland, finds the touch to tell this wholly Latino-feeling work may be a mystery, but he certainly does “get” it, being the rare case of an American director handling foreign-language material expertly and sensitively (John Sayles’ “Men With Guns” is another that comes to mind). His direction, too, of his newly discovered leads is extraordinary. Since the critical success of “Sin Nombre,” Fukunaga has been hired to make a stunning change of pace: a new version—shot in England--of the classic novel “Jane Eyre.” We may have a new director with the ability and versatility of director Ang Lee on our hands. I certainly hope so.

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