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## TECHNICAL DETAILS

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**Length:** 100 minutes

**Language:** Spanish

**Format:** 4K scope

**Locations:** Bajo Maestrazgo (Spain) and Dusseldorf (Germany)
THE OLIVE TREE - SHORT SYNOPSIS

Alma, 20, works in a chicken farm by the village of Canet, in the province of Castellon, on the East coast of Spain. She has a profound connection with her dearly beloved Grandfather despite the fact he has stopped talking years ago. But when he begins to refuse food too Alma becomes obsessed with an idea: the only way to save her Grandfather is to recover the two thousand year olive tree that the family uprooted and sold 12 years ago against his will.

Lying through her teeth, without a plan and even less money, Alma engages her wayward Uncle "Artichoke", 45, ruined by the crisis, her colleague Rafa, 30, her friends Wiki (Wikipedia) and Adele and a big part of the small community of Canet in an outrageous endeavour; to find and return the olive tree, lost somewhere in Europe, to its rightful spot in the family grove where it has been tended, and in turn, given life, for over 2 millenium.
Alma is 20 year-old and she survives working on a chicken farm in the town of Canet (region of Castellón). Like people from her generation, she is inheritor of a country in crisis and a region ruined; a place that has speculated and built until the last spot of its landscape.

Alma belongs to a family that is also in ruins, with a father, Luis, that during a time of prosperity, sold the most sacred thing for her: a millenary olive tree, planted during the roman times, in the family olive grove. Luis, defeated by the crisis, has had to come back to the family house, to live with his father, Alma´s grandfather, who decided to stop talking many years ago, when the olive tree was pull out of his land. And now, even to complicate more things, the patriarch has stop eating too.

Alma is obsessed with the idea that the only thing that could “bring back” her grandfather is the millenarian olive tree that the family sold against his will. And even though at the beginning her friends try to persuade her about going on this irrational adventure, Alma will convince, not only her uncle Alcachofa (45), a comic victim of the crisis, and her workmate Rafa (27), but also her friends Wiki and Adele and part of the small community of Canet. They’ll all embrace an impossible mission, even absurd: getting back the olive tree replanted somewhere in Europe, and bring it back to Canet, to the place where it should have never left.

“Sometimes you have to start things…”, Alma says, “even though you don’t know how will they finish”.

Powerful and fragile, fierce and delicate, self destructive and, at the same time, willing to give everything she has for her grandfather, the person she loves the most. Alma is a force of nature; a young woman who is able to change the course of things... or at least, to try it.

Therefore, without telling the truth, without a plan, and with almost no money, Alma makes not only that her friend Rafa “borrows” a half million euro truck, but also that he, and her uncle Alcachofa, drive the truck to Dusseldorf (Germany), where Alma and her friends have located the olive tree, recognizable for the shape of a dragon that it has in one of its branches.

For everybody in Canet’s surprise, the news regarding an old man, on a hunger strike and a niece willing to do everything in her hand to bring back the millenarian tree to its original place, runs through the social networks faster than the truck drives the roads of Europe.

In the meantime, an unaware Alcachofa happily drives, talking about his anger about his fate. And Rafa, while listening to him, will also try to understand the complicated Alma and her necessity of hurting herself.

Once in Dusseldorf, Alcachofa and Rafa find out that Alma lied to them, since no one is waiting to give them back the olive tree. But also, they’ll find out that they are not alone in their adventure.

In a tone that sometimes grazes the dark comedy, The Olive Tree is the story of an achievement and a trip that will not leave anybody intact, starting for our protagonist. The
Olive Tree is a story that talks with tenderness - and sometimes with humor - about Alma. About how much she can hurt herself. And also about everything she can do for the person she cares the most in this world. But also talks about what happened in Spain in the past 15 years. The hurt we’ve been granted with. The hurt we have done to ourselves. And what can we do to start overcoming of that wound.
CAST

Alma: ANNA CASTILLO
Alcachofa: JAVIER GUTIÉRREZ
Rafa: PEP AMBRÒS
Ramón: MANUEL CUCALA
Luis: Miguel Ángel Aladrén

As a director, Icíar has written and directed many renowned films. *Flowers from Another World*, her second film, was awarded at Cannes Film Festival in 1999 (Best Film in the International Critics' Week). *Take my eyes* (2003), her following film as writer and director, won 7 Goyas (Spanish Academy Awards), including Best Film, among many other international awards.

She directed a script by Paul Laverty in 2009, *Even the Rain*. The film was supported by Eurimages and obtained national and international recognition: 13 nominations to the Goya Awards, Panorama Award at the Berlinale, Ariel Award to best Latin-American film and it was in the short list of the foreign films selected for the Academy Awards in 2010 representing Spain.

Films:

**Katmandú, un espejo en el cielo** (2011)

*Goya Awards 2012*. 2 Nominations:
- Best Actress
- Best Adapted Screenplay
THE OLIVE TREE

**EVEN THE RAIN** (2010)

2011. Berlin International Film Festival
- Won: Panorama Award

**Goya Awards 2001:**
- Goya 2011 Best Supporting Actor.
- Goya 2011 Best Original Score
- Goya 2011 Best Production Supervision
- 10 Nominations including Best Director, Best Screenplay & Best Film

Film supported by Eurimages.

**MATAHARIS** (2007)

**Goya Awards 2008.** 5 Nominations:
- Best Actor
- Best Supporting Actress
- Best Director
- Best Screenplay

**San Sebastian International Film Festival 2007**
- Nominated Golden Seashell

**TAKE MY EYES** (2003)

**Goya Awards 2004:**
- Best Film
- Best Director
- Best Actress
- Best Actor
- Best Supporting Actress
- Best Sound
- Nominated Best New Actress
- Nominated Best Editing

**San Sebastian International Film Festival 2003**
- Silver Seashell Best Actress
- Silver Seashell Best Actor
- Nominated Best Golden Seashell
FLOWERS FROM ANOTHER WORLD (1999)

Cannes Festival 1999: Won Mercedes Benz Award.
Goya Awards 2000:
  - Nominated Best New Actor
  - Nominated Best Screenplay

HI, ARE YOU ALONE? (1995)

Goya Awards 1996: Nominated Best New Director
Valladolid International Film Festival 2005:
  - Won Best Director
  - Nominated Golden Spike
Paul Laverty was born in Calcutta, India, son of an Irish mother and Scottish father. He obtained a Philosophy degree at the Gregorian University in Rome. Thereafter he graduated in law school in Glasgow, Scotland, and did an internship with two of Scotland’s most celebrated lawyers. He became a fully qualified practising lawyer concentrating on civil and criminal law.

In the mid-eighties, he travelled to Nicaragua, Central America, and lived there for almost three years. He worked for a Nicaraguan NGO which provided hard evidence of human rights abuses during the war between the Nicaraguan Government (The Sandinistas) and the United States-backed Contras. During this work he travelled to the war-zones and also travelled widely to El Salvador, during its civil war, and Guatemala.

After his time in Central America, Paul made contact with British director Ken Loach as a result of which he wrote Carla’s Song, his first screenplay, starring Robert Carlyle, followed by My Name is Joe in which Peter Mullan won best actor in the Cannes Film Festival in 2000. Thanks to a Fulbright scholarship, he studied at the University of Southern California, where he researched the material for Bread and Roses, shot in Los Angeles and starring Adrien Brody.

During the 18 years, Paul and Ken have worked together and they have formed a very close working relationship. They both work closely with producer Rebecca O’Brien. Together they have won many international prizes for their work. The tandem Loach-Laverty, has been several times nominated to the Palm d’Or in Cannes and they won it in 2008 with their film The Wind that Shakes the Barley. As a screenwriter, Paul has won both in Cannes (Sweet Sixteen, 2002) and Venice Film Festivals (It’s a Free World, 2007)

Paul has already worked with Icíar Bollaín in the awarded Even the Rain and also in Katmandú, un Espejo en el Cielo, this last one, writing together with Icíar. The Olive Tree will be their third collaboration.

Films:

**JIMMY’S HALL** (2014)
Directed by Ken Loach

Cannes:
- Nominated, Palme d’Or
**THE OLIVE TREE**

*THE ANGEL’S SHARE* (2012)

Directed by Ken Loach.

**Cannes:**
- Won, Jury Prize
- Nominated, Palme d’Or

**San Sebastián International Film Festival:**
- Won, Audience Award.

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**KATMANDÚ, UN ESPEJO EN EL CIELO** (2011)

Directed by Icíar Bollaín

**Goya Awards:**
- Nominated Best Lead Actress
- Nominated Best Screenplay-Adapted

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**ROUTE IRISH** (2010)

Directed by Ken Loach.

**Cannes:**
- Nominated, Palme d’Or

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**LOOKING FOR ERIC** (2009)

Directed by Ken Loach.

**Cannes:**
- Won, Prize of the Ecumenical Jury
- Nominated, Palme d’Or
THE OLIVE TREE

IT’S A FREE WORLD (2007)
Directed by Ken Loach.

Venice Film Festival:
- Won, Golden Osella. Best Screenplay
- Won, SIGNIS Award – Honorable Mention
- Won, EIUC Award
- Nominated, Golden Lion

THE WIND THAT SHAKES BARLEY (2006)
Directed by Ken Loach.

Cannes:
- Won, Palme d’Or

CARGO (2006)
Directed by Clive Gordon.

TICKETS (2005)
Directed by Ken Loach and Abbas Kiarostami.
THE OLIVE TREE

Directed by Ken Loach.

Berlin International Film Festival:
- Won, Prize of Ecumenical Jury
- Won, Prize of the Guild of German Art House Cinemas
- Nominated, Golden Berlin Bear

SEPTEMBER 11 (2002)
Segmento Reino Unido.
Directed by Ken Loach.

Venice Film Festival:
- Won, UNESCO Award
- Won, FRIPESCI Prize, Best Short Film

SWEET SIXTEEN (2002)
Directed by Ken Loach.

Cannes:
- Won, Best Screenplay.
- Nominated, Palme d’Or

BREAD AND ROSES (2000)
Directed by Ken Loach.

Cannes:
- Nominated, Palme d’Or

MY NAME IS JOE (1998)
Directed by Ken Loach.

Cannes:
- Nominated, Palme d’Or
- Won, Best Actor
THE OLIVE TREE

CARLA’S SONG (1996)
Directed by Ken Loach.

Venice Film Festival:
- Won, The President of the Italian Senate’s Gold Medal
- Nominated, Golden Lion
The Story.

Spain has been living under an excruciating recession for 8 years now. Some have been more affected by it than others, but no one has remained untouched.

As we look around us, one can’t help but wonder, how does a 20-year-old live in Spain today? How are today’s youth facing up to the complete lack of opportunities, the corruption, the distrust of institutions? How do young adults who’ve been hearing about the recession since they were twelve or thirteen years old, and in many cases feeling its consequences in their own homes, see their parents, our government, our representatives? And above all, what do they see when they look at the future?

Young people are most likely living day-to-day with very few certainties.

Alma, our protagonist, is barely twenty years old and she has inherited a country in ruins, a countryside that has been sold and resold by speculators, and a landscape that has been gobbled up by construction.

In our story, Alma’s mother left her when she was a little girl. The prosperity of her childhood suddenly dissipated as she entered puberty. And in the present many of her friends are leaving, like so many other Spaniards, to look for opportunities elsewhere. Hundreds of businesses from the time of bonanza have closed their doors, including her family’s, which now stands in ruins.

In this time of incertitude, her almost only certainty is her granddad, and everything he represents. Though, she is also certain that her family didn’t do things right.

Alma hasn’t got much to lose, except her granddad, whose life is quickly fading. She also doesn’t have much to believe in, and she basically trusts no one.

For me, El Olivo speaks about believing again. About learning to trust again. Because one the highest prices we’re paying on this recession, aside from the country’s impoverishment, is the loss of something essential: hope. And that’s why, in our story, no one remains indifferent in the face of Alma’s quest to get back her olive tree.

 Powerful and fragile. Fierce and delicate. Self-destructive, yet capable of giving everything for the person she loves. Alma is a force of nature, a young woman capable of changing the tides... Or at least try, by embarking, and embarking others in an impossible, almost quixotic, mission that borders on black comedy.
Because, against all logic, Alma feels that her tree can change it all, and as it turns out by the end, she is not wrong. She may not be able to bring back the light to her grandfather’s eyes, as she intended, but she can heal her relationship with her dad. And she’ll be able to forgive herself and, in the process, forgive him.

And maybe start trusting others and finally look towards the future, doing things a different way.

It is a privilege for me to able to work again with a Paul Laverty screenplay. Once again, like in “Tambien La Lluvia,” Paul has managed to tackle a wide and pressing subject matter such as the economic recession, by using completely unique situations and creating full-fledged, three-dimensional characters that defy all clichés and predictability. Alma’s, Alcachofa’s, Rafa’s and even Luis’ adventures are very particular and personal, but they turn out to be quite universal. Because Paul’s screenplay, beyond its general theme, talks about human relationships, it talks about the precarious balance of our emotions, about our fears, about our frailty.

Paul, using humor and infinite nuances, manages, with just a handful of characters, to speak about our recent past, about our present time, and about any and all of us.

**Film Imagery and Aesthetic.**

**El Olivo** takes place in the village of Canet and its surroundings, a contrasting landscape between ancient, rural and industrialized areas.

Millennial olive trees with spectacular trunks, slowly sculpted by time and nature, stand next to massive chicken farms, where birds are born and bred from chick to hen in merely thirty days to be shipped to the market.

El Bajo Maestrazgo, the estate where the movie takes place, is a territory that is both inland and coastal. Of startling and unsettling beauty, it falls somewhere in the middle between countryside and urban. Between past and present. It is also a landscape of sounds. The whistling of the wind in the branches or the birds chirping gets mixed up with the loud, incessant clucking of the hens, forced to eat without rest, day and night.

I intend to capture visually the olive trees’ millenary beauty, the deep intimate connection with nature that Ramon and Alma have, and that we discover mostly through flashbacks. And I also intend to portray visually the disconnect with that same landscape, showing how a construction boom has left a beautiful coast ravaged by half-built, abandoned apartment complexes overlooking the sea.

Tiny, humble Canet and its bright Mediterranean light stand in contrast to the powerful and industrial Dusseldorf, at the heart of Germany’s industrial muscle, with all of its corporate
buildings, and the great Rhin river. The massive barges will mark the pass of time in our story as they’re dragged up and down its waters. And a new stark contrast between nature in the millenary olive tree, and its glass and steel cage, as it is used, ironically, as a symbol of sustainability.

Although the tone and visual aspect of the film are realistic, the movie is at its heart a tale, a modern metaphor. And this will allow us to play with the film’s aesthetic, not portraying reality “as is,” but rather using light and color in photography, art design and costume design to sharpen the contrasts we portray in the film.

The film’s rhythm and imagery will heighten all of these contrasts: the Mediterranean light of Canet, and Northern Europe’s light; the peace and quiet in Canet, and the industrial banging in its surroundings; the stunning beauty of the olive trees in their natural habitat, and the shocking image of those same tress mutilated, in a pot, ready to be sold; the hundred-year-old country homes, and the brand new beach condos by the beach.

And the contrast between Alma’s vital rhythm, fast and intense, just beginning to live her life, and Ramon’s paused, almost still tempo, just about to end his life.

**Cast & Crew.**

In order to bring to life Alma and her family, we are combining actors with a long professional career, like Antonio de La Torre, with young newcomers to the industry, like Anna Castillo, in the role of Alma.

We will also cast real residents from Canet and its neighboring villages, to play several parts, including Ramon, the grandfather.

I started collaborating with Antonio de la Torre back in 1995 for my first film, “Hola, estás sola?” Since then he has been part of almost every film I’ve made. Alcachofa is a character that seems to be written with Antonio in mind (which is actually not the case, since Paul never writes any part thinking of a particular actor or actress).

Antonio has the great ability of infusing a character with comicality, in the midst of a dramatic situation, which is precisely what Alcachofa needs. Throughout his successful career, Antonio has grown tremendously as an actor and has reached his full potential, becoming an extraordinary professional in the field. He has broaden up his dramatic register without losing his spontaneity, and hi everyday man appearance, which suits so well the pat.

Anna Castillo, Alma, has a few works for TV and film under her belt. Anna combines the youthfulness and energy required of this character, together with great instincts and intelligence when she tackles each scene. After the work I did with her during casting, I have complete faith in her natural charisma (an absolute must for Alma’s character), as well as in
her intellect in order to understand the character’s darker, self-destructive side. Anna has a tremendous capacity to “be in the scene”, giving truth to each line and transmitting great emotion.

Although we’re still in the process of casting, it’s highly probable that both Alchachofo’s brother, Luis, and the grandfather, Ramon, will be played by unknown actors with little or no experience, and in the case of Ramon, by a man who is actually from Canet, and who is not a professional actor.

As I can attest from previous films like “Flores de Otro Mundo,” “También La Lluvia” and “Kamandú, Un Espejo en El Cielo,” mixing professional actors with actors with almost no credits, and also with individuals who have never acted before can make for a very rich experience, creating a great deal of veracity and freshness in the acting, and infusing the film with a degree of energy and truth that brings forth great emotion.

We’ll start the casting process in Germany within the next few weeks, and we expect to apply the same principles as we’ve applied to the Spanish casting.

**The Team.**

Juan Gordon and I are working to put together a first rate crew who will, as it happened in our previous work together “También la Lluvia,” be able to fulfill the potential and creativity of the beautiful story written by Paul Laverty.

On the German side we’re also relying on the collaboration of our partner Michael Weber, who is in charge of running the Dusseldorf shoot, and putting together the German cast and crew. They will fill certain key positions to compliment the rest of the Spanish crew.

On the Spanish side, we are hoping to secure Alex Catalán as Director of Photography, music composer Alberto Iglesias, with whom I’ve been lucky enough to collaborate on two different occasions, and editor Nacho Ruiz-Capílas. They’re all my usual collaborators, and I am really looking forward to working with them again, to give life to this modern tale, this reflection on what we’re going through that “El Olivo” intends to be.

_Icíar Bollaín_

_Director_
Every time I face a new project I always ask myself a few questions trying to guess whether the effort is worth it or not. Will this story relate to part of the audience, will it move them, does it make a statement on particular issues, will it be capable of changing certain perceptions in the public’s eye. But none of these questions have any real value if the film we want to produce does not engage its audience, either from a pure entertainment point of view or an emotional or intellectual one.

In the case of a Paul Laverty script I know from the start that the story will not be bland. It surely comes loaded with intention and message and this is such an advantage as so many films today have no intention to live beyond its 90 minutes screening time.

Such foundation is invaluable for a director like Iciar Bollain. She is able to flesh out those rich characters into identifiable people and familiar contrasts which enable our audience whether it is in Spain, Germany, Latin America or elsewhere to relate and be touched by what is being told in the film.

THE OLIVE TREE will be the second film I produce with Iciar and Paul. The first one, EVEN THE RAIN, proved a titanic effort but one of many satisfactions at different levels. From the start, we managed to form a very sound creative team, full of respect for the other but also fierce in its criticism. Fortunate enough there were no egos or narcissistic personalities to handle!

EVEN THE RAIN proved to be a film that matters with plenty of resonance in Spain, France, Germany and Latin America. It became the Spanish candidate for the Oscars. It played at many festivals obtaining many times the public’s award, including the audience award at the Berlinale which I am particularly proud of. We managed to turn a remote water issue in Bolivia into a story that moved audiences in the rest of the world.

EVEN THE RAIN obtained the support of Eurimages in 2009, which was essential to completing our finance and in the same spirit we would like to obtain Eurimages support this time with THE OLIVE TREE continuing Eurimages support to Iciar Bollain in her career.

THE OLIVE TREE is a completely different kind of film. It deals with tradition, family values and how today’s economy is erasing all traces of not only how we lived a few years ago but also what was important for us then. But it doesn’t tell the story from a melodramatic, naïve point of view but through the eyes of a very real and complex 20 year old girl who desperately needs to confront her reality and stop adding to her own misfortune.

The story takes place in Spain and Germany and we have structured the film as a coproduction between Morena Films (Madrid) and The Match Factory (Cologne) who have started a few years ago a new production arm (Match Factory Productions) adding to their traditional international sales activities.
Some interest has already been shown on the part of distributors as Eone will distribute in Spain and Piffl Medien in Germany (who already worked with us on Even The Rain) Eone will handle international sales.

I am convinced THE OLIVE TREE will be a film that will linger in our minds after we see it and certainly a sound proposal to receive Eurimages support which we consider essential to complete its financing.

Juan Gordon
Producer