



Cronos

Director: Guillermo del Toro

Production Companies: Iguana Producciones, Ventana Films, IMCINE, University of Guadalajara

Producers: Berta Navarro, Arthur H. Gorson

Co-producers: Alejandro Springall, Bernard L. Nussbaumer

Associate Producers: Rafael Cruz, Jorge Sánchez, Julio Solorzano Foppa

Production Administrator: Lourdes Pérez Nido

Production Co-ordinators: Sachiko Uzeta,

Yvette Brestyanszky, Sunil Perakash

Location Manager: Pablo Buelna

Assistant Directors: Sebastián Silva, Joaquín Silva, Andrés Ortega

Continuity: Mariana Gironella, Valentina Leduc

Screenplay: Guillermo del Toro

Director of Photography: Guillermo Navarro

Special Effects: Laurencio Cordero

Graphics: Ría Lewerke

Editor: Raúl Dávalos

Associate Editor: Paul O'Bryan

Production Designer: Tolita Figueroa

Art Director: Brigitte Broch

Art Designer: María Figueroa

Art Co-ordinator: Terry Fernandez

Costumes: Genoveva Petitpierre

Wardrobe Supervisor: Federico Castillo

Make-up: M. Carrajal, Julieta Napoles

Special Make-up Effects: Necropia

Hairstylist: Julieta Napoles

Titles/Opticals: Mercer Titles and Optical Effects

Music: Javier Alvarez

Music Supervisor: Steven Soles

Music Producer: Ian Dearden

Music Editor: Kevin Kern

Choreography: Esther Soler

Sound Manager: Matthias Ehrenberg

Sound Supervisors: Claudia Becker,

Marissa Iglesias

Sound: Fernando Cámara

Dubbing Mixer: John F. Reiner

Sound Re-recordists: David E. Fluhr,

George R. Grooves, John B. Asman

Supervising Sound Editor: Burton M. Weinstein

Foley Artists: Dean P. Minnedy, Robert Muchnicki

Foley Mixer: Paul Aronoff

Dubbing: Miguel de Luna, Nerio Barberis

Stunt Co-ordinator: Gerardo Moreno

Narrator: Jorge Martínez De Hoyos

Cast:

Federico Luppi (*Jesús Gris*)

Ron Perlman (*Angel de la Guardia*)

Claudio Brook (*Dieter de la Guardia*)

Margarita Isabel (*Mercedes Gris*)

Tamara Shanath (*Aurora Gris*)

Daniel Giménez Cacho (*Tito*)

Mario Iván Martínez (*Fulcanelli, the alchemist*)

Juan Carlos Columbo (*funeral director*)

Fernando de Bernal (*Manuelito*)

Luis Rodríguez (*buyer*)

Javier Alvarez (*bleeding man*)

Gerardo Moscoso (*drunk*)

Eugenio Lobo (*stoned man*)

Adriana Olivera, Clementina Rojas, Tzinia Salgado,

Luis de Icaza, Jorge Bolada, Ignacio Raiz Oviedo

(*tango students*)

Francisco Sánchez (*Mimo*)

Laurencio Cordero (*watchman*)

Mexico 1993

92 mins

Digital 4K

A BFI release

Guillermo del Toro

Cronos

+ intro by Guillermo del Toro

Fresh and bracing, del Toro's feature debut announced the arrival of a strikingly original cinematic voice. Antiques dealer Jesús Gris discovers an ancient mechanical scarab artefact, but is unaware of the power it holds. While the parasite inside the device grants eternal life to its new host, it also causes an aversion to daylight and an unquenchable thirst for human blood. With its interest in family and the true nature of horror, *Cronos* set a course for things to come in del Toro's career. Inventively employing vampirism in its assessment of the relationship between the USA and Mexico, this darkly comic work remains a highlight within the filmmaker's incredible body of work.

Jason Wood, Executive Director for Public Programmes and Audiences

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

A contemporary review

Turning away from the erotics of vampiric desire, *Cronos* rather surveys need, a banal thirst for blood which reaches its extraordinary climax with Jesus licking up blood from the floor of a men's toilet on New Year's Eve. 'I am Jesús Gris,' he announces. The names have to be translated for this film to really work for an English-speaking public: 'I am Grey Jesus.' *Cronos* tells the story of how the main character comes to embody his name, and die (so that she – Jesús's granddaughter Aurora – may live). It is a film about the ruin of Jesús's body.

The young Mexican director Guillermo del Toro has insisted on how important Catholicism is to his story of ordinary vampirism (addiction). Thus, rather than merely falling into sentimentalism, the end of *Cronos* arguably remains faithful to the structure of the plot on which it is modelled – the death and resurrection of Christ revealing the melodramatic dimension of the central story of Christian religion. The twist in the tale is that the symbolically cannibalistic relationship to Christ practised in Catholic liturgy is here pressed into the service of del Toro's film about a now vampiric Jesús (is vampirism to cannibalism what soup is to the main meal?). In this sense, del Toro's 'copy' interestingly transforms our relationship to the 'original'.

The connections between cinema and religion are well-known, but rarely have they been presented so pointedly in film – although this has always been an important dimension of the vampire genre, most recently in Coppola's version of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. This is where the character of the young Aurora becomes so important, and not merely as a symbol of future hope or the object of Jesús' desire. Aurora is an onlooker: she stands by, witnessing the action of the film and the transformation of her grandfather. More than anything else, Aurora looks on, mesmerised and hardly comprehending what she sees. From this point of view, she stands in for the viewer, infantilising his or her gaze. And as a potential 'blood donor', she also represents the colour – red – that Jesús's white body lacks: when he finally dies, and gives himself up to the light, his white skin is confused with the screen with which the film ends. If Jesús represents religion, Aurora might represent the cinema – and its most important colour, as both Godard and Polanski know very well. From the point of view of *Cronos*, and vampire films in general, film is essentially red and white, not black

Cronos has been scanned and restored at 4K resolution using the original 35mm camera negative, by Les Films du Camélia and BFI, with the supervision of Guillermo del Toro, and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1

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and white. It is this aspect of the cinematic experience – childish and religious – that cultural critics like Adorno warned against (and which filmmakers like Spielberg market).

As is evident, like many contemporary films, *Cronos* is a film about film. It also, however, tells a movingly simple story about ageing, the yearning for more time, the fragility of the body and addiction. It quotes Cronenberg's study of addiction, *Videodrome* – as Jesús inserts his hand under his grey skin before peeling it off – but its slightly lighter, humorous tone for some reason recalls another film about obsession, Patrice Leconte's *The Hairdresser's Husband*. The film's simple story line and slowed-down pace already distance it from the production values of conventional genre movies: it feels like an art-house film. More important, however, is the melancholic humour which Federico Luppi, who plays Jesús, displays towards this obsession with youth. In *Cronos*, however, this humour is eventually pushed to macabre extremes as the now resurrected Jesús, dressed up for his funeral, wanders the city streets with his black suit, white shirt and tie on back-to-front – as if his head had been twisted around (perhaps by Aurora) one hundred and eighty degrees: Jesus, un-dead and fragile, becomes a scruffy doll.

In this sense, *Cronos* remains a genre film, and like most vampire and horror movies from the American continent, it exhibits both the concerns of a postcolonial present unreconciled with the past (has the *Cronos* device been made from Aztec gold melted down by the Conquistadors? Is it Aztec sacrifice rather than Catholic ritual that makes its claim on Jesús?) and the perceived fragility of the body in a technologically changing world in which the machine-human interface is seen as increasingly blurred. The *Cronos* device is some kind of pre-industrial cyborg experiment gone horribly wrong.

John Kraniauskas, *Sight and Sound*, October 1994