

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF SUNSHINE HOTEL

CLEAN HANDS

A DOCUMENTARY FILM BY MICHAEL DOMINIC





CLEAN HANDS: PRESS KIT

TOTAL RUN TIME: 98 MINUTES

5.1 SURROUND



SYNOPSIS

This is not a “garbage dump film”, though we start in one.

Shot over the course of seven years, 2011-2018 in Nicaragua, *Clean Hands* is a feature-length fly-on-the-wall documentary which tells the story of the Lopez family surviving against the backdrop of Central America’s largest garbage dump, La Chureca and beyond. It is about family, extreme poverty, the hope and innocence of children, rescue and salvation, and the challenges we all face.

The four Lopez children are ages 6 to 10 when we first meet them. They have never been to school. They cannot read or write. They are kids, prone to mischief and silliness. They rely on each other as siblings, playmates, companions, and friends. Unlike their parents, they don’t fully grasp what they don’t have. La Chureca is the only life, and only world, they’ve ever known.

Through fortuitous circumstance, a foundation hears of the plight of the family and comes to their aid. They build them a small house in the country that sits on land they can farm. The kids can attend school for the first time, and the family can escape the desolation and dead-end life of La Chureca.

The children take to their new lives and are excited to attend school for the first time. But, their parents, even after getting what they want, all is not well. As the family adjusts to the opportunity, new home, and farm-life, as it often does for all of us—becomes complicated. Blanca (their mother) in particular must face her demons from her troubled past. She misses her city life in Managua and abandons her family for long periods of time, leaving Javier alone to care for the children in the country, making their promising new future uncertain.



MICHAEL DOMINIC

DIRECTOR | PRODUCER | CAMERA

Michael is an multi-award winning documentary filmmaker and photographer from New York City. In the last decade he dedicated his life to making work that has a social conscience. His objective for his work is truth, to show what lies beneath the surface or out of sight.

Before Clean Hands, he made several other films, most notably the feature length documentary, Sunshine Hotel and the narrative short Tulips for Daisy. Sunshine Hotel won three Best Documentary awards and was nominated for another dozen or so. After Sunshine Hotel's run of almost thirty film festivals it ran on national US television for two years on Sundance Channel. Tulips for Daisy was also nominated for several awards including a nomination from the Akira Kurosawa Memorial Short Film Competition.

His tenure as a photojournalist took him around the globe. His work has appeared in dozens of outlets including The Sunday Telegraph, The Tribune De Geneve, France-Amérique, The



New York Daily News, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Post, Playboy, Redbook, Le Figaro, Le Parisien, Bilan, Châte-laine, L'actualité, Jet, Fashion TV, Sundance Channel, MTV, VIVA, as well as many others.

In the mid-90s he was based in London where he directed music videos, including three for Norman Cook of Fatboy Slim.

He studied film at The School of Visual arts in New York City from 1990 to 1994. At the same time



he worked for Annie Leibovitz as an intern and photo assistant.

He currently lives in Jackson Heights, Queens New York with his wife Ting.

ALEXANDRA KRISTINE SMITH

| EDITOR |

Alexandra is a film editor based in NYC. She fell into and in love with editing at her first job, where she cut concerts and music videos. Since then, she has worked on features, short films, television as well as commercials for major advertising agencies.

Alexandra holds an MFA in Design and Technology from Parsons The New School for Design.

When she is not editing, Alexandra is rarely idle as she is an avid survival horror gamer, miniature food maker and helicopter cat-mom.



JUAN PABLO GUTIERREZ

| ASSOCIATE PRODUCER |

Juan Pablo is one of the most sought after Associate Producers living and working in Nicaragua. He has worked for more local and international productions and news organizations then he can count.

When not working in film he helps his family run their two ranches in the beautiful countryside of Nicaragua.

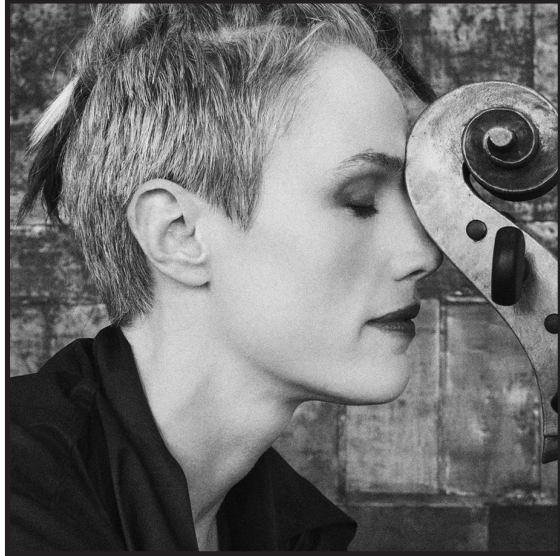
He has three children and lives in Jinotepe, Carazo.



ZOË KEATING

| MUSIC |

A cellist since the age of eight, Keating pursued electronic music and contemporary composition as part of her Liberal Arts studies at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. After graduation she moved to San Francisco and fell in love with the startup culture of the late 1990's, building a career as an information architect and data analyst while moonlighting as a cellist in rock bands. Keating eventually combined her love of music and technology, using a computer to live-layer her cello and performing for late-night after-parties in her San Francisco warehouse.



She is known for both her use of technology - which she uses to sample her cello onstage - and for her DIY approach, releasing her music online without the help of a record label.

Keating composes for TV, film and dance and her songs are used as bumper music for NPR's Morning Edition, the theme music to other radio shows, as the thinking-music of the Sherlock Holmes character on CBS Elementary and in countless documentaries. However, she has discovered that her music has achieved a surprising degree of ubiquity for a DIY artist, appearing at last-count in over 20,000 YouTube videos of dance performances, amateur films, plays, live paintings, video gaming soundtracks and wedding processions. Her advocacy for DIY artists stems, in part, from her efforts to obtain some income from these unofficial uses while at the same time allowing people to use her music in their own artistic expression.



A vocal advocate for the rights of artists and creators, Keating writes and speaks often about copyright and the mechanics of the music industry economy. She was elected a governor of the San Francisco chapter of the Recording Academy, named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum and serves on the board of CASH Music, a nonprofit organization that builds open source digital tools for musicians and labels.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



When I'm talking about my work, I often get asked the same question. "Why?" "Why do you do what you do? Why do I travel thousands of miles to dangerous parts of the world to document life? I do it because I am fascinated and ravenously curious about the unknown. As a result I try to navigate the tight spaces of the world, and take away beautiful stories and images from them. The objective of my work is truth, to show what lies beneath the surface or out of sight.

The way that I started making this film was that I was in Nicaragua on assignment as a photo-journalist for a European newspaper. A friend of mine who was

doing another documentary in Nicaragua suggested that I go to La Chureca, the massive landfill in Managua. When I saw it for the first time I was speechless. My work had taken me to many places of abject poverty, but this seemed more extreme.

The days passed and I couldn't shake what I had seen. I knew that I needed to learn more about the denizens that spent their days sifting through the foulest of the foul to sustain life. I made the decision before I left Nicaragua to return the next month and begin making a film that would shine a light on what I had witnessed. My plan was to make a film about several people living there lives over the course of six months or so, edit and have a completed film within a year.

That was in 2011 and my plan got ...revised.

When I saw the four kids from this film gathering rotting fish carcasses for the first time, their togetherness, lightheartedness and ease in front of the camera, struck me. I knew that this family would and should be the film.

I wound up traveling to Nicaragua 11 times over seven years spending close to 300 days there in total. The final trip was in January of 2018. The result of which is nearly 200 hours of footage smelted down into a 1 hour 40 minute documentary that I could never have envisaged when I began.

This film is the work that I am most proud of in my life.

The other thing that I often get asked is "What advice would you give to someone making a documentary for the first time?" To me ethics in documentary is paramount so my answer is always the same, "Tell the truth of the subject and not your own."

MAIN CREDITS

DIRECTOR | PRODUCER | CAMERA

MICHAEL DOMINIC

EDITOR

ALEXANDRA KRISTINE SMITH

FEATURING THE MUSIC OF

ZOË KEATING

ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS

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PUBLICITY DETAILS

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