

Silencio de Neto, El (1994)

Directed by
[Luis Argueta](#)

Writing credits
[Luis Argueta](#)
[Justo Chang](#)

Genre: [Drama](#)

Tagline: Guatemala 1954. While a nation loses its innocence a boy fights to be heard.

Plot Outline: A boy struggles against his stifling family life during the 1954 Guatemala coup.

Credited cast:

Óscar Javier Almengor	.... Neto Yepes	the title character
Pablo Arenales	.... Rodrigo	son of maid and (Eduardo?)
Mildred Chávez	.... Rosa	older kitchen maid, mother of Rodrigo
Indira Chinchilla	.... Nidia	younger maid, does child care
Miriam S. De Sosa	.... Directora del colegio	the school principal
Julio Diaz	.... Eduardo Yepes	Neto's father
Otto Fernández	.... Nuevo Maestro	the post-coup teacher
Rudy García Ochoa	.... Nuevo Juez military	the new military administrator
Eduardo-Jose Guerrero	.... German	Neto's fellow club member
Frida Henry	.... Abuela Mercedes	Neto's grandmother
Ingrid Hernandez	.... Ani	Neto's girlfriend
Eva Tamargo Lemus	.... Elena Yepes	Neto's mother
Victor López	.... Portero del colegio	school doorman
Ricardo Mendizábal	.... Arzebispo	Archbishop
Herbert Meneses	.... Ernesto Yepes	Neto's uncle
Gabriel Navasi	.... Hombre en Julgado	
Patricia Orantes	.... Tia Cristy	Neto's aunt
Sergio Paz	.... Alberto	Neto's fellow club member
Diego Peralta	.... Mario	Neto's younger brother
Ana Luisa Yapur	.... Maestra Emilia	the pre-coup teacher

Also Known As:

Silence of Neto, The (1994) **Runtime:** 106 min **Country:** [Guatemala](#) / [USA](#)

Language: [Spanish](#)

Color: [Color](#)

User Comments:

[Juan Pablo Murga \(jpmurga@hotmail.com\)](mailto:jpmurga@hotmail.com)

Guatemala, Guatemala

Date: 5 February 1999

Summary: As a guatemalan I am proud of this movie

I think this movie is great, Its the classical story of a kid entering puberty, but at the same time shows a lot of Guatemala's culture of the time (50's) which in some ways hasn't changed. It manages to present the movie in a turbulent political time while not completely turning to one side.

El Silencio de Neto

a k a The Silence of Neto

1994 - USA/Guatemala - Political Drama/Childhood Drama

Starring [Oscar Javier Almengor](#),
[Julio Diaz](#), [Eduardo Jose Guerreo](#),
[Eva Tamargo Lemus](#), [Herbert Meneses](#). Directed by [Luis Argueta](#).
(NR, 106 minutes).



This politically inspired drama represents Guatemala's first commercial feature film. Set in Guatemala, 1954, at the time a U.S. funded government overthrow of left-wing president Jacob Arbenz, it chronicles the struggles of a pre-adolescent boy to grow up in a tumultuous time. Neto, at the funeral of his uncle Ernesto is suddenly visited by his uncle's ghost. Their conversation becomes a flashback of six months earlier. The memory follows the changes wrought by the intervention of U.S. military and local troops as the coup begins. Neto's family's life is profoundly affected by the military action. Neto's father, a teacher, loses his job to military personnel. His classmates and their families begin to disappear. Neto and his family must flee their city. There is also conflict between his father and uncle, Ernesto as they hold differing views on child rearing. Both men are also in love with Neto's mother. Neto does have one dream: to fly solo in a balloon. ~ Sandra Brennan, All Movie Guide

THE SILENCE OF NETO

In Spanish With English Subtitles

The Silence of Neto is Guatemala's exciting first foray onto the international screen. Filmed entirely on location in that country, the film tells the very human story of a young boy's coming of age in Guatemala in the 1950's, a period marked by political upheaval, CIA meddling, and Cold War paranoia. Directed and co-written by native Guatemalan Luis Argueta, *The Silence of Neto* features the U.S. and international television star, Eva Tamargo Lemus along with a cast of some of Guatemala's most famous stage actors. A film of great dramatic power and stunning visual beauty, *The Silence of Neto* was shot in the handsome colonial city of Antigua and in the lush hills and staggering volcanic landscapes surrounding it. The film not only tells a compelling story, it gives audiences a fascinating inside look at a people about whose culture the rest of the world knows little beyond the occasional sensational headline.

The Silence of Neto heralds the proud arrival of the Guatemalan film industry.

Apart from the cliché' imagery of Banana Republic regimes and Marxist guerrilla fighting, little is known about Guatemala by the rest of the world. *The Silence of Neto*--the first feature film produced in Guatemala for worldwide distribution--is especially important because it contradicts the cliché's with a sophisticated portrait of a family with intricate lives and real problems. The film also exposes the manipulative and often destructive role that the U.S. historically has played in Latin American affairs. As we sift through the remnants of the Cold War, the film's revelations--which are surprising, even to many Guatemalans--shed new light on a murky period of our hemisphere's history.

In the course of showing the world a more accurate picture of Guatemala, *The Silence of Neto* also proves that this small Central American country--with its staggeringly beautiful locales--is capable of supporting a viable film industry. Along with such recent important feature films as *Like Water for Chocolate* and *El Mariachi*, *The Silence of Neto* is another world-class example of the new vitality of Latin American cinema.

Message on the Blackboard:

“There is no human power capable of crushing the will of a people unless its leaders betray them. People and government together constitute dignity.”

— Juan José Arévalo, President of Guatemala, 1946-1951

The film's historical setting: a country in turmoil

The year is 1954, Guatemala.

The presidency of Colonel Jacobo Arbenz faces crushing pressure from a U.S.-sponsored plot to replace his administration with one more favorable to U.S. interests. On June 27, Arbenz's controversial resignation marks the end of Guatemala's "Ten Years of Spring."

The period began with the "October Revolution" in 1944, when the 14-year dictator, Lieutenant General Jorge Ubico was ousted from his presidency; the protests by students and workers against his harsh repression of the labor movement had finally reached a critical mass and triggered a reformist military coup on the night of October 20. In the aftermath, Guatemala saw its first legitimately elected leader. Juan Jose Arevalo, take power. Arevalo proceeded to put an end to Ubico's repression by Secret Police and to revoke the unfair labor laws that bound the rural peasantry to the land essentially as indentured servants. As the conservatives fretted over his "socialist tendencies" Arevalo permitted the labor movement to flourish, including the right to form unions and the right to strike.

The Revolution's turning point came with the election of Jacobo Arbenz. After the country's first smooth transition from one elected leader to another, Arbenz set out to break the control U.S. monopolies held over the Guatemalan economy. The main object of his offensive was the United Fruit Company. The fruit-grower held 550,000 acres of Guatemalan land, only 15% of which was actively being cultivated. When Arbenz passed a law distributing all idle land, even privately owned, among the rural peasants, United Fruit had a lot more at stake than the monetary compensation they were offered. And Arbenz was clearly testing the will of the United States.

The United Fruit company had strong ties to the Eisenhower administration, including a major shareholder in the U.N. Ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge. They took advantage of the anti-Communist fervor of the time, and convinced the administration that Guatemala was a critical test to keep Communism out of the western hemisphere. The CIA took the extraordinary step of commandeering a Guatemalan radio channel and broadcasting reports intended to convince the Guatemalan people that their own government had betrayed them and were in fact Communists. The reports escalated to the point of inventing military skirmishes and exaggerating the numbers of "Liberation Army" troops prepared to march on the capital and save Guatemala.; in fact, the CIA was training a ragged assemblage of mercenary troops just over the Honduran border. CIA planes conducted air raids, bombing strategic targets and whipping he people into a fearful frenzy.

When Arbenz's own small airforce would not take to the skies to combat the attack, he admitted defeat and chose to resign. His successor, Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, was flown back to Guatemala from abroad on the private jet of U.S. Ambassador Peurifoy, and Arbenz was allowed to leave to exile. With no real power-base at home, Armas reverted to use of cruel force to wield control of the fervid social unrest, disbanding labor unions and peasant leagues, and killing or arresting thousands of opponents to his rule. The social progress made during the preceding ten years was essentially erased.

The events of 1954 and the alternating interference and indifference set the stage for the decades to follow: the guerrilla movements of the 60's, the civil wars of the 70's and the mass killings of the 80's marked the painful and tumultuous recent history of Guatemala.

CREDITS: THE CAST & CREW

CAST

Eva Tamargo Lemus is well-known in the international Latino community for her work on daytime television, or telenovelas, most notoriously for her role in El Magnate. She has vast experience in television, radio and print commercials and boasts an impressive roster of roles she brought to the stage with the Repertorio Español in New York City. Herbert Meneses played a variety of characters on Guatemalan Children's Radio for 13 years while finding time to act and direct local repertory theater. Julio Diaz has won several awards for his work on the stage including the prestigious OPUS for El Animal Vertical and the Best Actor in the Festival of Antigua for his role in Los Forjadores del Imperio. Indira Chinchilla is a featured actress in the Guatemalan National Ballet. Oscar Javier Almengor and the other young players in the film auditioned and won their roles with experience in school plays. Frida Henry, Patricia Orantes, Mildred Chavez, Zoila Portilla and Ricardo Mendizabal are all familiar names to Guatemalan theater audiences.

- Neto Yepes OSCAR JAVIER ALMENGOR
- Ernesto Yepes HERBERT MENESES
- Eduardo Yepes JULIO DIAZ
- Elena Yepes EVA TAMARGO LEMUS
- German EDUARDO JOSE GUERRERO
- Alberto SERGIO PAZ
- Nidia INDIRA CHINCHILLA
- Abuela Mercedes FRIDA HENRY
- Tia Cristy PATRICIA ORANTES
- Rodrigo PABLO ARENALES
- Mario DIEGO PERALTA
- Rosa MILDRED CHAVEZ
- Ani INGRID HERNANDEZ
- Arzobispo RICARDO MENDIZABAL
- Matilde ZOILA PORTILLO

THE CREW

- Executive Producer LUIS ARGUETA
- Director LUIS ARGUETA
- Director of Photography RAMON SUAREZ
- Screenplay JUSTO CHANG and LUIS ARGUETA
- Executive in Charge of Production MAGALI CAPI
- Associate Producer ABIGAIL HUNT
- 1st Assistant Director/Line Producer JORGE RAMIREZ SUAREZ
- 2nd Assistant Director KEN LEWIN
- Location Manager ADRIAN GRUNBERG
- 1st Assistant Camera STEVE GLADSTONE
- Production Sound Mixer ANTONIO ARROYO
- Gaffer JOE QUIRK
- Production Design JUSTO CHANG
- Art Director ANA SOLARES
- Propmaster/Setdresser VIVIAN RIVAS
- Wardrobe GLORIA WURMSER
- Editor DAVID TEDESCHI
- Supervising Editor GLORIA PINEYRO
- Original Score JOSE GALLEGOS and MAURICE GALLEGOS
- Translation ASA ZATZ

The Musical Score

GALLCO ENTERTAINMENT

Composers Jose & Maurice Gallegos

Gallco Entertainment is comprised of the combined talents of Jose Gallegos and his son, Maurice. The senior Gallegos was born in Columbia and has lived and toured throughout South America as a pianist and conductor. Settling in New York in 1986, he worked as a studio keyboard player for albums with Tito Puente, Paquito D'Rivera, David Byrne and many others. He also performed live with Harry Belafonte, Tom Jones, Shirley Bassey, and Julio Iglesias--and has played keyboard for the film scores of Crossover Dreams and A Place to Live. In 1981, Gallegos founded the "Jazz Faculty" at the Brooklyn Conservatory of Music where he directs the program and teaches. Jose' and his son Maurice frequently collaborate on composing and producing jingles for TV and radio. When on his own, the younger Gallegos does the majority of his work in R&B and Rap idioms. He has played keyboards for recordings by Lisette Melendez, Tommy Page, and The Covergirls and has written and produced songs for Marky Mark, De'sree, and the soundtrack for The Ref. For the last two years, Maurice and his father have lent their considerable talents and inspiration to composing the score for **The Silence of Neto**.

LUIS ARGUETA

Director/Screenwriter

A native of Guatemala, **Luis Argueta** came to the United States to study industrial engineering, then went on to study Film and Literature at the University of Michigan. There, his film adaptations of the plays of Fernando Arrabal prompted the celebrated writer-director to hire Argueta as Assistant Director on his own film Guernica. Moving to New York in 1977, Argueta worked with such renowned companies as Ampersand Productions and Sandbank Films, In 1978, he returned to Guatemala to shoot his first documentary, The Cost of Cotton, which won awards in Sweden and France and was later broadcast on PBS. Back in New York, Argueta became Executive Producer for Guede Films, one of the oldest Hispanic Production companies in the U.S. In 1988, he founded [Morningside Movies, Inc.](#) The company's numerous credits include a Clio Award-winning spot for Burger King and the "Unity" campaign for the National Crime Prevention Council. Recently, Argueta has begun to realize his dream of expanding into dramatic features. His screenplay Into Thin Air was a finalist at The Sundance Institute's Summer Program in 1989; and since 1990, he has been at work bringing **The Silence of Neto** to the screen.

"The Silence of Neto is the silence of all Guatemalans. It is a silence deeply ingrained in all aspects of our culture by the events of the last four decades."

"It is only by telling a very specific story - of a particular moment in a particular place - that a filmmaker can hope to evoke universal themes."

"The kind of cinema I aim to produce draws on history, draws its strength from native roots. Great cinema is firmly anchored in the culture it comes from."

"With this film we intend to show the international community that Guatemala is a country that laughs, suffers, sings, and cries - a vital and intense country"

- Director Luis Argueta

Awards and Acclamations

Guatemala's official entry for the 1995
Oscar Nomination for Best Foreign Film

Best Opera Prima
New England Festival of Latin American Cinema

Special Jury Award
Barritz Film Festival, France

Special Mention
Federation of International Cinema Critics
International Film Festival, Puerto Rico

*"For the Maturity of its cinematic language in a first film and for
the clarity with which it communicates its vision of Guatemalan history"*

El Quijote
International Federation of Film Societies
Huelva Film Festival, Spain

*"For its formal simplicity replete, at the same time, with emotional
expressiveness, and its good taste; for demonstrating the need to face the future
constructively in a spirit of hope and optimism; and for being a pioneer in
Guatemalan cinematographic creativity through its introduction of new avenues
of artistic expression for the incorporation of new ideas"*

*"When you have something to say, you must say it."
"This silence is bad for a person, Neto. It is ingrained in us from the time we are
born, but it's up to each of us to fight to tear it out from inside...Not until then,
will we be able to breathe."*

-Uncle Ernesto