

Familia Rodante (Rolling Family)

Argentina etc 2004 103 mins

Crew and Cast

Director	Pablo Trapero
Screenplay	Pablo Trapero
Cinematography	Guillermo Nietoe
Emilia	Graciana Chironi
Marta	Liliana Capuro
Claudia	Ruth Dobel
Claudio	Federico Esquerro
Oscar	Bernardo Forteza
Paola	Laura Glavee

Synopsis

Buenos Aires, the present. Grandmother Emilia is celebrating her eighty-fourth birthday surrounded by her extended family. She receives a phone call from her long-lost sister inviting her to be matron of honour at the wedding of her niece in the distant province of Misiones, near Argentina's border with Brazil.

On the spur of the moment, she decides to accept the invitation and to travel with the whole family in their elderly camper van. On the journey north, the family encounter minor incidents. They break down, are stopped by the police, suffer illness or toothache, and run out of petrol. The granddaughter's partner joins them on his motorcycle. Tensions appear in the marriages of Emilia's two daughters, and her teenaged grandchild flirts with his cousin and her best friend. When the family finally reach Misiones, the wedding has already begun. They join in the festivities, and Emilia is reunited with the friends and family of her youth.



Reviews

Pablo Trapero's *Familia Rodante* is an amiably sour road movie, a predictably plotted family saga which still feels heartfelt. It's nearly a given, once Emilia's family agrees to accompany her from Buenos Aires to her remote hometown on the border of Brazil, that there will be many mechanical and familial breakdowns along the way, some comic and some tragic. But Trapero's cast has a freewheeling energy, and there's enough colourful roadside detail across the Argentinean countryside to keep things lively as the characters' conflicts reach their inevitable boiling point, centered around the hotheaded Oscar, who unleashes his righteous wrath against both the irresponsible hippie father Claudio of his grandson and his smugly bourgeois brother-in-law. While some of the many characters get short shrift, the interaction of the adolescent cousins shows that has insight into teen sexuality. Emilia tells a fireside story of a good man gone bad, but its meaning seems lost on the family. They seem to have internalized the corruption they encounter along the road. The best thing about the film is the way Trapero encapsulates the meaning of the experience with the quiet rhyming shots of Emilia sitting alone that open and close the film. Emilia is the moral centre of the film, and the subtle difference in these two shots speaks volumes about her relationship with her family.

Josh Ralshe, *Al Movie Guide*

Having reaped great acclaim with *'Crane World'* and *'El Bonaerense'*, Argentinian writer-director Pablo Trapero ups the ante with one of the finest films released here this year. Not that his achievement makes itself fully felt until the final shot; before then, it may just feel like a consistently amusing but rather ramshackle, even chaotic road-movie with no real plot or thematic substance.

It starts simply: Emilia (played by Trapero's own grandmother, Graciana Chirino) feeding pets and preparing for a visit by family and friends to celebrate her 84th birthday. At the party there's a surprise call from a forgotten cousin, inviting her to be matron of honour at a wedding in the village of her birth. Cue for the entire clan – four generations (if one includes a new baby) – to pile into her son-in-law's ancient camper van and make the long, often testing trip from Buenos Aires to the Brazilian border.

There's no real drama: just a risk of breakdown and the tensions that arise from cramming so many folk – some glad they're there, others not – into a small, hot, bumpy space. Trapero knows family can be both crutch and burden (or haven and prison); that unsentimental understanding, expressed in deftly observed details, brings much deliciously gentle, telling humour to the movie, which often feels like Altman at his most gleefully wayward and witty. But warmth's there, too; with the magnificently understated final shot mentioned above, it becomes clear we've seen a film of subtlety and wisdom, a shaggy-dog story about learning to deal with disappointment, compromise, confusion and loss: learning, in short, to survive life in all its painful truth and beauty

GA Time Out, November 2005

