

EXCLUSIVE · WORLD PREMIERE · FICG 41

***Dumb and Dumber* Co-Writer Bennett Yellin's Supernatural Thriller 'Día de Muertos' Set for World Premiere at FICG 41**

Yellin penned the script while simultaneously writing for Conley Entertainment Group's \$100M slate. Mexico-U.S. co-production produced by *Chocolat* actor-turned-entrepreneur Gaelan Connell's partner Francisco Arias, with executive producer Stephen Israel (*Swimming with Sharks*).

GUADALAJARA, MEXICO — APRIL 2026

DÍA DE MUERTOS, a supernatural thriller co-produced between Mexico and the United States, will have its world premiere at the 41st Guadalajara International Film Festival (FICG) with three official screenings from April 23–25, 2026, competing in the "Hecho en Jalisco" section.

The film marks the latest project from screenwriter **Bennett Yellin**, who co-wrote the \$247 million-grossing comedy classic *Dumb and Dumber* (1994) alongside Peter Farrelly. Yellin has been on a prolific streak: he is an active screenwriter for **Conley Entertainment Group (CEG)**, a production company backed by a \$100 million fund to produce three films per year, as profiled by *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2024. For CEG, Yellin wrote *Traction*, a horror thriller. Simultaneously, he penned *Día de Muertos* for VIDENS Films, bringing his signature genre instincts to a story steeped in Mexican mythology and psychological terror.

The 85-minute film follows Jane, a woman who awakens in a rural Mexican clinic during Día de Muertos celebrations with no memory of her identity. Caught between supernatural visions, medical secrets, and the looming threat of a serial killer known as "The Piper," she must uncover who she is before it is too late.

Direction is by **Brian Conley** and **Nathan Ives**, with executive production by **Stephen Israel**, whose credits include the critically acclaimed *Swimming with Sharks*. Additional executive producers include **Dane Scism** and **Brett Patterson** of Conley Entertainment Group.

The Mexican production was led by **Francisco Arias** through **VIDENS Films**, a Guadalajara-based studio. Arias's business partnership with **Gaelan Connell** (credited as Gaelan Draper) — the actor who debuted at age 10 opposite Johnny Depp and Juliette Binoche in Lasse Hallström's *Chocolat* (five Academy Award nominations, \$152M worldwide) — was instrumental in bridging the U.S.-Mexico creative pipeline that brought the project to life.

THE GAELAN CONNELL CONNECTION

Connell's trajectory from child actor to creative entrepreneur is a throughline that contextualizes *Día de Muertos*'s Hollywood-to-Guadalajara DNA. After *Chocolat*, Connell starred in *Bandslam* (2009) alongside Vanessa Hudgens, Aly Michalka, and Lisa Kudrow (82% on Rotten Tomatoes), then led all 31 episodes of Cartoon Network's live-action series *Level Up*. He went on to write, direct, and star in the feature *Blood, Sand & Gold*, on which he brought Francisco Arias aboard as main producer — forging a creative partnership that has now spanned more than a decade.

Together, Connell and Arias also produced the short film *I'm Ben*, on which they worked with **Cristin Milioti** — now internationally recognized as the star of HBO's *The White Lotus* (Season 3) and the Hulu hit *Palm Springs*.

Today, Connell is co-founder and Executive Creative Director of **Quirk Creative** in New York City, recognized by *Adweek* as Fastest Growing Agency in 2019. His dual identity as a Hollywood-trained creative and a commercial strategist has been central to how the *Día de Muertos* production was structured as a cross-border venture.

THE CEG & BENNETT YELLIN PIPELINE

Conley Entertainment Group's \$100 million production fund, launched with the mandate to produce three theatrical films per year, represents one of the most significant independent financing commitments in recent memory. The company's slate and operational model were profiled by *The Hollywood Reporter* in 2024. Yellin's dual engagement — writing *Traction* for CEG while simultaneously penning *Día de Muertos* for VIDENS Films — positions the screenwriter at the nexus of two active production pipelines, reinforcing the commercial viability of the *Día de Muertos* project and the caliber of talent involved.

The Hollywood Reporter's Spanish-language edition covered FICG 41's programming on March 30, 2026, including *Día de Muertos* as part of the festival lineup.

"Bennett Yellin is one of the most versatile screenwriters working today. Writing *Día de Muertos* alongside his work for Conley Entertainment Group speaks to the kind of dual-track productivity that studios look for."

— INDUSTRY CONTEXT

CAST HIGHLIGHTS

PRINCIPAL CAST

MAX REEVES	Lead / Producer — <i>Día de Muertos</i>
ADRIANA PAZ	Cannes 2024 (<i>Emilia Pérez</i>) · Invited to the Academy 2025
ALEJANDRO ÁVILA	Mexican television star (<i>Doménica Montero</i> , <i>Amor Amargo</i> , <i>El Maleficio</i>)
AARON JAKUBENKO	<i>Tidelands</i> (Netflix) · <i>The Shannara Chronicles</i> (MTV/Paramount)

FULL CREDITS

KEY CAST & CREW

SCREENPLAY

Bennett Yellin
Co-writer, Dumb and Dumber · Writer, Traction (CEG)

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Stephen Israel
Swimming with Sharks

PRODUCER (MEXICO)

Francisco Arias
VIDENS Films, Guadalajara

CAST

Adriana Paz
Emilia Pérez (Cannes 2024) · Academy invite 2025

CAST

Aaron Jakubenko
Tidelands (Netflix), The Shannara Chronicles

DIRECTORS

Brian Conley & Nathan Ives

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS

Dane Scism & Brett Patterson
Conley Entertainment Group

LEAD / PRODUCER

Max Reeves

CAST

Alejandro Ávila
Doménica Montero, Amor Amargo, El Maleficio

PARTNER / BUSINESS

Gaelan Connell (Draper)
Chocolat, Bandslam · Co-founder, Quirk Creative NYC

SCREENING SCHEDULE — FICG 41

OFFICIAL SCREENINGS · "HECHO EN JALISCO" COMPETITION

THURSDAY, APRIL 23 5:30 PM · Cineforo · with Q&A

FRIDAY, APRIL 24 6:00 PM · Cineteca Sala 3 · with Q&A

SATURDAY, APRIL 25 4:30 PM · Cinépolis Galerías S12

PRODUCTION DETAILS

95%

FILMED IN
JALISCO, MEXICO

120+

DIRECT JOBS
CREATED

90%

LOCAL
CREW

100%

VFX PRODUCED
IN MEXICO

PRODUCTION OVERVIEW