

Cassandra (film)

Cassandra is a 2023 American biographical drama film directed by Roger Ross Williams from a screenplay co-wrote by Williams and David Teague. It stars Gael García Bernal, Roberta Colindrez, Perla De La Rosa, Joaquín Cosío, Raúl Castillo, El Hijo del Santo and Bad Bunny. It had its world premiere at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival on January 20, 2023, and was released by Amazon MGM Studios in a limited release on September 15, 2023, prior to streaming via Prime Video on September 22, 2023.

Plot

In the late 1980s, gay wrestler Saúl Armendáriz lives in El Paso, Texas with his mother, regularly crossing the border to Ciudad Juárez to participate in lucha libre wrestling matches. He begins wrestling as ‘El Topo’ until he meets a new trainer, Sabrina, who inspires him to compete as an *exótico* and trains him to be a winner within this role. He develops the identity of

Cassandra



Amazon Prime Video release poster

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|-----------------------|--|
| Directed by | <u>Roger Ross Williams</u> |
| Written by | <u>Roger Ross Williams</u> <u>David Teague</u> |
| Produced by | <u>Gerardo Gatica</u> <u>Todd Black</u> <u>David Bloomfield</u> <u>Ted Hope</u> <u>Julie Goldman</u> |
| Starring | <u>Gael García Bernal</u> <u>Roberta Colindrez</u> <u>Perla De La Rosa</u> <u>Joaquín Cosío</u> <u>Raúl Castillo</u> <u>El Hijo del Santo</u> <u>Bad Bunny</u> |
| Cinematography | <u>Matias Penachino</u> |
| Edited by | <u>Yibran Asuad</u> |

‘Cassandro’ and begins to confront elements of his identity and explore his personal relationships whilst gaining a reputation for himself within lucha libre. ^[3]^[4]

Cast

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|----------|--|
| | <div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Affonso Gonçalves</div></div><div><div></div><div>Sabine Hoffman</div></div></div></div></div> |
| Music by | <div><div><div><div></div><div>Marcelo Zarvos</div></div></div></div> |

- Gael García Bernal as Saúl Armendáriz / Cassandro
- Roberta Colindrez as Sabrina
- Perla De La Rosa as Yocasta
- Joaquín Cosío as Lorenzo
- Raúl Castillo as Gerardo / El Comandante
- El Hijo del Santo as himself
- Bad Bunny as Felipe

Production

In July 2020, Gael García Bernal joined the cast of the film, with Roger Ross Williams set to direct from a screenplay he wrote alongside David Teague, with Amazon Studios in negotiations to distribute.^[5] They wrote the screenplay over the course of several years.^[6] *Cassandro* is Williams' first narrative film.^[4] He previously told Cassandro's story in his 2016 documentary short *The Man Without a Mask*.^[7] In June 2021, Roberta Colindrez and Bad Bunny joined the cast of the film, with Amazon Studios officially set to distribute. The studio would later switch it to a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film upon release following the formation of Amazon MGM Studios Distribution.^[8]^[9]

Music

The music score is by Marcelo Zarvos.^[7] The film features songs from the disco era such as "Call Me" by Blondie and "Yes Sir, I Can Boogie" by Baccara.^[3]

Release

The film had its world premiere at the 2023 Sundance Film Festival on January 20, 2023.^[10] It also screened at the 50th Telluride Film Festival on September 2, 2023.^[11]^[12] It was released by Amazon MGM Studios in a limited release on September 15, 2023, before streaming via Prime Video on September

Reception

On the review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes, 92% of 130 critics' reviews are positive, with an average rating of 7.3/10. The website's consensus reads: "Gael García Bernal steals hearts as the charismatic *Cassandra* in this feel-good biopic about a wrestler that triumphs in the macho world of Lucha Libre while embracing his true self."^[15] Metacritic, which uses a weighted average, assigned the film a score of 76 out of 100, based on 34 critics, indicating "generally favorable reviews".^[16]

David Rooney of *The Hollywood Reporter* called the film an "entertaining biopic, which doubles as a gorgeous depiction of mother-son love and an exhilarating exploration of fearless queer identity in a macho environment," adding, "Gael García Bernal nails his best role in years, giving a performance steeped in cheeky humor, resilience and radical self-belief."^[3]

Carlos Aguilar of *Indiewire* rated the film a B+, writing, "'Cassandra' balances the triumphant exaltation of Arbendáriz's singular evolution as a trailblazer who didn't set out to become one, with the obvious, still not entirely eliminated bigotry that made his trajectory so significant and groundbreaking in the first place."^[4]

Ross Bonaime of *Collider* wrote that the film "is both riveting and often touching, and Bernal gives quite possibly his best performance in this beautiful story of finding yourself and becoming who you were always supposed to be."^[17]

Accolades

| Award | Date of ceremony | Category | Nominee(s) | Result | Ref. |
|---|--------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| <u>Astra Film Awards</u> | <u>January 6, 2024</u> | Best International Actor | <u>Gael García Bernal</u> | Won | ^{[18][19]} |
| | | Best International Actress | <u>Roberta Colindrez</u> | Nominated | |
| <u>GLAAD Media Awards</u> | <u>March 14, 2024</u> | Outstanding Film – Streaming or TV | <i>Cassandra</i> | Nominated | ^[20] |
| <u>Women Film Critics Circle Awards</u> | <u>December 18, 2023</u> | Best Actor | Gael García Bernal | 4th place | ^[21] |

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External links

- [Cassandra](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14954534/) (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt14954534/>) at IMDb
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