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How to portray the issue of corruption that has put the political activity in the spotlight? Director **Rodrigo Sorogoyen** and his loyal co-writer **Isabel Peña** decided to shine a light on it by plunging themselves into a fictional corruption case and depicting it in a thriller-inspired style. The duo delivered their film *The Realm*, which was invited to world-premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival, before competing for the Golden Shell at the San Sebastián International Film Festival.

The story follows Manuel López Vidal (one **Antonio de la Torre**, who dives into the role with a stirring and visceral performance), an influential local politician poised to satisfy his raging ambition by making the leap to national politics. One fine day, however, tales of murky goings-on in his past (and present) implicating both himself and his colleagues in the party (embezzlement, Swiss bank accounts, etc.) reach the media. Immersed in a maelstrom of document-shredding and excuse-peddling before the party leader (**Ana Wagener**), just to comply with procedures set in place by a newcomer who wants total transparency (**Francisco Reyes**), Manuel will come to realise something: he will ultimately be the one to carry the can, because his colleagues have decided to lay all the blame on him and save themselves. “Watch out for your enemies, but above all your party colleagues,” we hear.

The Realm is a painstaking account of the fall of a fiefdom that looked destined to last forever. In the world of film, such dizzying plunges into the abyss make for perfect thriller-fodder. Sorogoyen makes good use of his undeniable staging skills to lend a narrative and stylistic punch to Manuel’s spiralling struggle for survival, evoking some of the best examples of the genre — like the work of David Fincher, for example. The omnipresent electronic score by **Olivier Arson** adds to the heart-stopping qualities of a film that doesn’t get bogged down in subtleties, packed with scenes that revel unabashedly in their action for longer than strictly

necessary to maintain a constant tension and edited with surgical precision by **Alberto del Campo**.

From bitter arguments to tense car chases and clashes with a probing press (in the form of a reporter played by), *The Realm* ramps up the suspense at a merciless pace, all the while impressing upon all of us outside the world of politics that we too have skin in the game. The audience might well see corruption reflected in the characters — but will they see themselves?

The Realm was produced by Tornasol Films, Trianera PC A.I.E., Atresmedia Cine and Bowfinger, in collaboration with France's Le Pacte and Mondex&cie. International sales are in the hands of Latido Films.

by Cineuropa

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