

## Document Citation

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Author(s)	Kay Armatage
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## El Diablo Nunca Duerme

### The Devil Never Sleeps

**Lourdes Portillo**

USA/MEXICO 1994

87 minutes ■ Colour/16mm  
Production Company: **Xochitl Films**  
Executive Producer: **Lourdes Portillo**  
Producer: **Michelle Valladares**  
Screenplay: **Lourdes Portillo**  
Cinematography: **Kyle Kibbe**  
Editor: **Vivian Hillgrove Gilliam**  
Sound: **José Araujo**  
Music: **Mark Adler, Lola Beltrán**

Print Source: **Xochitl Films,**  
**347 Dolores Street, San Francisco,**  
**California 94110, USA.**  
Tel: (415) 255-7399.  
Fax: (415) 255-7704.

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Fax: (415) 255-7704.

When filmmaker Lourdes Portillo was informed that her beloved Tio (uncle) Oscar Ruiz Almeida was dead from a gunshot wound to the head, she left immediately for the family home in Chihuahua, Mexico. His widow declared his death a suicide. Most of his family, however, cried murder, with suspicions cast variously on his business partner, his farm hand, even his second wife.

*The Devil Never Sleeps* investigates Tio Oscar's life and death, exploring the irrational as well as the logical, looking for clues in the history of the family and its values and in the shared cultures on both sides of the Mexican-American border. Interviews with relatives, friends and colleagues peel away each strand of the mystery to reveal, like a soap opera, the tension, humour, gossip, love and black secrets of the family. But the film is not a simple family drama. Seances, conflicting evidence, the homeland of Pancho Villa, acupuncture, missing tombstones, a broken family, a Chicana activist and bar owner mine the family romance to reveal the subtle nuances of Mexican culture, the bonds that rule the family, and the ways these ties are embedded in the social codes of a culture.

A deeply personal film, *The Devil Never Sleeps* charts the intersection of numerous routes. The superb editing interweaves both film and video footage, as well as movie excerpts, TV soaps, 8mm home movies, archival footage, family photographs and stylized visual reminiscences to build multiple layers

of analysis and autobiography, evidence and hypothesis, melodrama and the police procedural, fiction and documentary, realism and stylization, investigation and lyricism.

■ **Kay Armatage**

**Lourdes Portillo** is a Chicana filmmaker who has been writing and making films for over 15 years. Most of her work as a filmmaker has been divided between fiction and documentary, always looking into broadening the horizons of Latin American culture as perceived in North America. Her films include: *Las Madres: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* (86), *La Ofrenda: The Days of the Dead* (89), *Vida* (89), *Columbus on Trial* (92), *Mirrors of the Heart* (93), *Sor Juana: Phoenix of the Americas* (93), *The Devil Never Sleeps* (94).

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