

# Summer 1993 (Estiu 1993)

Spain (2017) 94 minutes

Director: Carla Simón

Cast: Laia Artigas (Frida)  
Paula Robles (Anna)  
Bruna Cusí (Marga)  
David Verdaguer (Esteve)



Screening 23 October 2019 at Swindon Arts Centre

## Synopsis

In Carla Simón's touching autobiographical film, six-year-old Frida looks on in silence as the last objects from her recently deceased mother's apartment in Barcelona are placed in boxes. Although her aunt, uncle, and younger cousin Anna welcome her with open arms, it's only very slowly that Frida begins to get used to her new home in the countryside. Punctuated by moments of youthful exuberance and mature ruminations, this coming-of-age drama, set amongst summery hues, is an extraordinarily moving snapshot of being a child in an adult world, anchored by flawless performances by its two young stars.

## Reviews



This debut from Carla Simón is a jewel. In its subtlety, richness and warmth it is beguiling – complex and simple at the same time. It is also very moving. *Summer 1993* is about childhood and a child's fraught relationship to the adult world, and has some of the most miraculous child performances I can remember.

Frida is a lonely six-year-old who has been sent away from her home in Barcelona to live with her aunt and uncle and their infant daughter Anna in the countryside. But there is nothing idyllic about it. Frida is going away because her mum has just died, and it appears her father had also died, a few years previously. Frida is in shock, or she is simply too young to process what is happening.

Simón has a masterly way of controlling long, wordless scenes involving just Frida and Anna: the very essence of kids just aimlessly playing among themselves. What a lovely film it is.

*Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian*

When Franco died in 1975, young Spaniards lost no time catching up with the counter-cultural spirit at work in the rest of the Western world, embracing sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. All those drugs, however, were to leave a sad legacy: by the middle of the 1990s, Spain had the highest incidence of AIDS in Europe. There is only a fleeting reference to this tragedy in Carla Simón's *Summer 1993*, but its shadow hangs over every sunny scene.

Frida is six when she's uprooted from her home in Barcelona. Both of her parents are dead, the cause undisclosed, and she's to live in the Catalan countryside with her uncle Esteve and aunt Marga, who have a four-year-old daughter, Anna, a blithe child who immediately accepts Frida as her big sister.

The story of this summer of dislocation is drawn from Simón's own childhood and it's seen entirely through Frida's bewildered eyes.

Frida doesn't know how to express her sadness. She's not a child who finds release in tears, so she acts up and, inevitably, Anna is often her target.

Simón and her team auditioned about a thousand children to play Frida. It paid off. Laia Artigas and her younger co-star are so unselfconscious that they may well have forgotten the existence of the camera. Frida's gaze governs everything, taking you back to the mysteries, the insecurities – and the joys – of being six.

*Sandra Hall, Sydney Morning Herald*

## Film Facts

- Laia Artigas was the second-to-last girl auditioned for the role of Frida out of almost 1,000.
- The two child actresses were chosen because they displayed a power struggle relationship during the casting process.
- The house and village squares featured in the film are where Carla Simón spent her own childhood in Catalonia.