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Luis Tosar stars in
Jaume Balagueró's
Sleep Tight



What's the
Grade?

B+



Capsule Review

**PRAG
DA**

What Have You Done César?

Friday, November 2, 2012

The question should be: What *hasn't* he done? Luis Tosar's César puts horror icons [Freddy Krueger](#) and [Jason](#) to shame in [Jaume Balagueró's](#) brilliant and taut thriller *Sleep Tight*, a film that's bound to affect apartment dwellers in the same way [Jaws](#) kept folks out of the water during its theatrical run.

Rotten Tomatoes Plot: Toiling silently amongst the residents of an everyday Barcelona apartment building, doorman César (Luis Tosar) harbors a dark secret: his sole desire in life is to make others unhappy. When he sets his sights on Clara ([Marta Etura](#)), one of his building's cheeriest residents, his sick need blossoms into a full-fledged obsession. Embarking on a series of private and physical violations against Clara, César becomes determined to ruin her life by any means.

Director: Jaume Balagueró ([REC](#))

What's Best: Balagueró is fast becoming one of Spain's finest filmmakers. By his own admission, *Sleep Tight* is your typical "bad guy torments innocent girl story" with lots of hidden tricks. It's those tricks, marvelously performed by Tosar ([Miami Vice](#), [Cell 211](#)) that make *Sleep Tight* such a joy to watch. At first glance, César appears almost normal... but as the film progresses, he slides further and further into "one sick puppy" territory.

Making writer Alberto Marini's story all the more compelling is its *plausibility*. As the building super, César has access to everyone's apartment (if they're at home or not.) César's brazenness is without equal, whether he's buying the silence of Clara's young neighbor Úrsula ([Iris Almeida](#), in a sensational turn) or literally *parking* himself under Clara's bed until she falls asleep. As authorities *home* in on his signal, César proves ever resourceful in displacing blame.

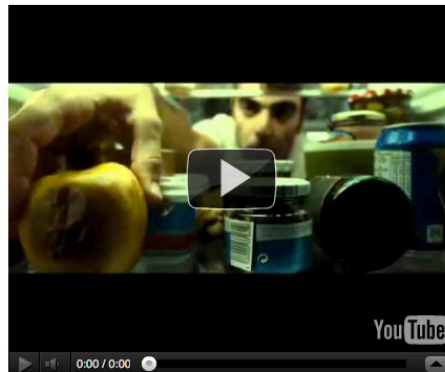
Though unable to find happiness, César *loves* his job. 'I wouldn't trade this for anything.' Running in and out of Clara's apartment becomes an exercise in creepiness... Simple gross outs like using Clara's toothbrush escalate to cockroach infestations and even worse (the final quarter of the movie is downright scary.)

Etura (who starred with Tosar in *Cell 211*) is fantastic as the oblivious and vulnerable Clara. [Beautiful](#) and sweet, it's easy to understand why César would focus his unwelcome affections on her.

What's Not: César, moments of calm notwithstanding, is a monster. I can see where some audiences may be incapable to look past the horrors, and in turn be unable to appreciate the delicious way they're presented on screen. Thankfully, I'm sufficiently desensitized to this sort of thing: I loved it.

Best Line: Despite making Clara's life a living hell, César ups the ante with 'I think it's time we got *serious*.' Poor Clara. That said, his exchanges with Úrsula prove most entertaining, "You didn't think 60 shitty Euros would keep me quiet forever?" and César's later reply 'Let's not *kid* ourselves' when he turns the table on his pint-sized collaborator.

Overall: All horror movies should be *half* as effective as *Sleep Tight*. Balagueró gives his star Tosar plenty to work with, including a supposed soft side where he visits his incapacitated mother in a nursing home. These bedside *chats* 'We'll wipe that smile off her face' and 'Things are getting complicated. I think I've gone too far' give us an understanding of where César developed his *issues*. Watching his mother helpless to do anything but lay there and listen to her son's tirades are just one more example of how scary Balagueró's *Sleep Tight* can be. Thank you [Festival of New Spanish Cinema](#) for giving me the chance to witness it. In case you missed last night's showing, you can see *Sleep Tight* at [AFI's Silver Theatre](#) next Wednesday at 9:30 PM.



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