



VIVA

## *Proof of concept*

I recently made a 15 minute short film to share the vision I have for the feature. This proof of concept has done quite well on the current festival circuit - showing there is a strong appetite and audience for this story.

It can be watched [HERE](#).  
password: freedom

# VIVA

IN CUBA,  
THE TOURISTS  
GET TO LEAVE.

BUT THE CUBANS  
HAVE TO ESCAPE.

[www.vivafilm.net](http://www.vivafilm.net)



## *The Feature*

The following treatment speaks to the feature film.

A street scene in Havana, Cuba, showing multi-story buildings with balconies and people walking. The scene is overlaid with text.

## *The Film*

## **VIVA**

“When an American businessman travels to Havana to strike a deal with the government, he meets a Cuban ballerina desperate to escape from the island. As he spends time with her, he begins to peel back the veneer of the supposed tropical paradise to discover the realities of life in Cuba.”



# *Synopsis*

For Simon Reeves, a trip to **Cuba** promises achievement and adventure. The brilliant engineer is on his way to close a huge telecommunications deal with the government there. One that will save his job. And he has visions of mojitos, pristine beaches and sultry salsa dancers in his head.

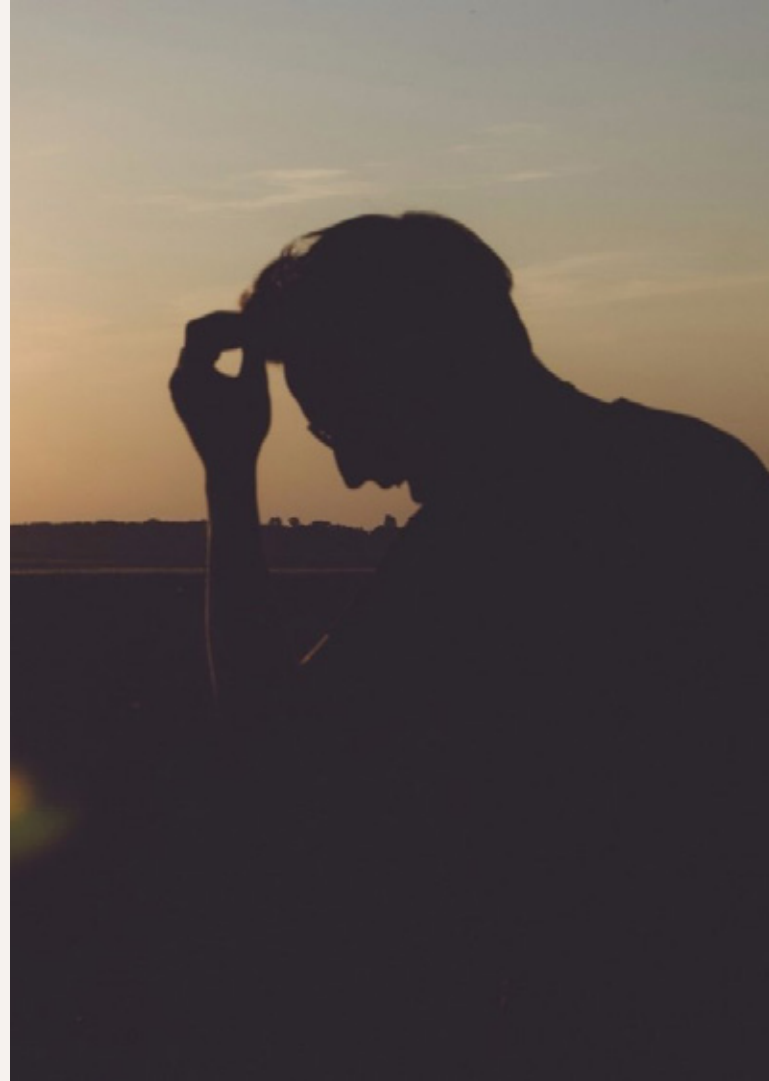
But for 25-year-old ballerina, Lorena Cordova, the **Cuba** of Simon's dreams doesn't exist. Living in a small town south of Havana, her **Cuba** is one of hardship, scarcity and suspicion. In her head, all she nurtures are visions of escaping her island prison.

Simon's deep curiosity about life in communist **Cuba** set he and Lorena on a collision course that have consequences neither of them could imagine.

From shaking his government shadow to watching the daily suffering, Simon's peek behind **Cuba's** curtain is shocking and sobering.

For Lorena, her chance meeting with Simon transforms her everyday life at the same time as it opens new doors for her future.

VIVA is the story of an American entrepreneur and a **Cuban** ballerina, bound together on an adventure steeped in political intrigue and danger that ultimately reveals the realities of an imprisoned island – and changes both of them forever.



## *Characters*

### **SIMON**

Simon Reeves, an American entrepreneur, is headed to **Cuba** to close a mega-deal with the government. But he's got more than saving his job on his mind. He's also very excited to see socialism in action while enjoying the island paradise as-advertised. But his trip takes an unexpected and dangerous turn as he discovers that real life in **Cuba** isn't what it seems.

### **LORENA**

As a 25-year-old struggling with the deprivations, demands and struggles of everyday **Cuban** life, Lorena's only peace comes when she is practicing ballet, getting ready for the biggest audition of her life -- and from her growing fantasies of one day escaping her island prison by any means necessary.

## *Characters*

### **CAPTAIN MARTINEZ**

He's the **Cuban** government's top "greeter," the man assigned to see to it that VIPs get the VIP treatment while they're on the island. His boundless charm and quick smile have won him many friends over the years. Now assigned as Simon's escort, his real job is to make sure the government gets what it really wants from the American entrepreneur.

### **TATI**

Loud, crass and all about the party, Vivi has been Lorena's best friend since they were kids. She's the opposite of Lorena in just about every way; she's a terrible student, completely carefree and totally popular in their tiny high school. She's also savvy, street-wise and the girl who keeps Lorena's life interesting.

## *Music*

Music has acted as the ambassador of the Cuban people for generations.

The film will feature music old and new that is definitively Cuban. From traditional Afro-Cuban jazz to modern Cuban music from artists like **Pit Bull** and **Camilla Cabello**.





VIVA

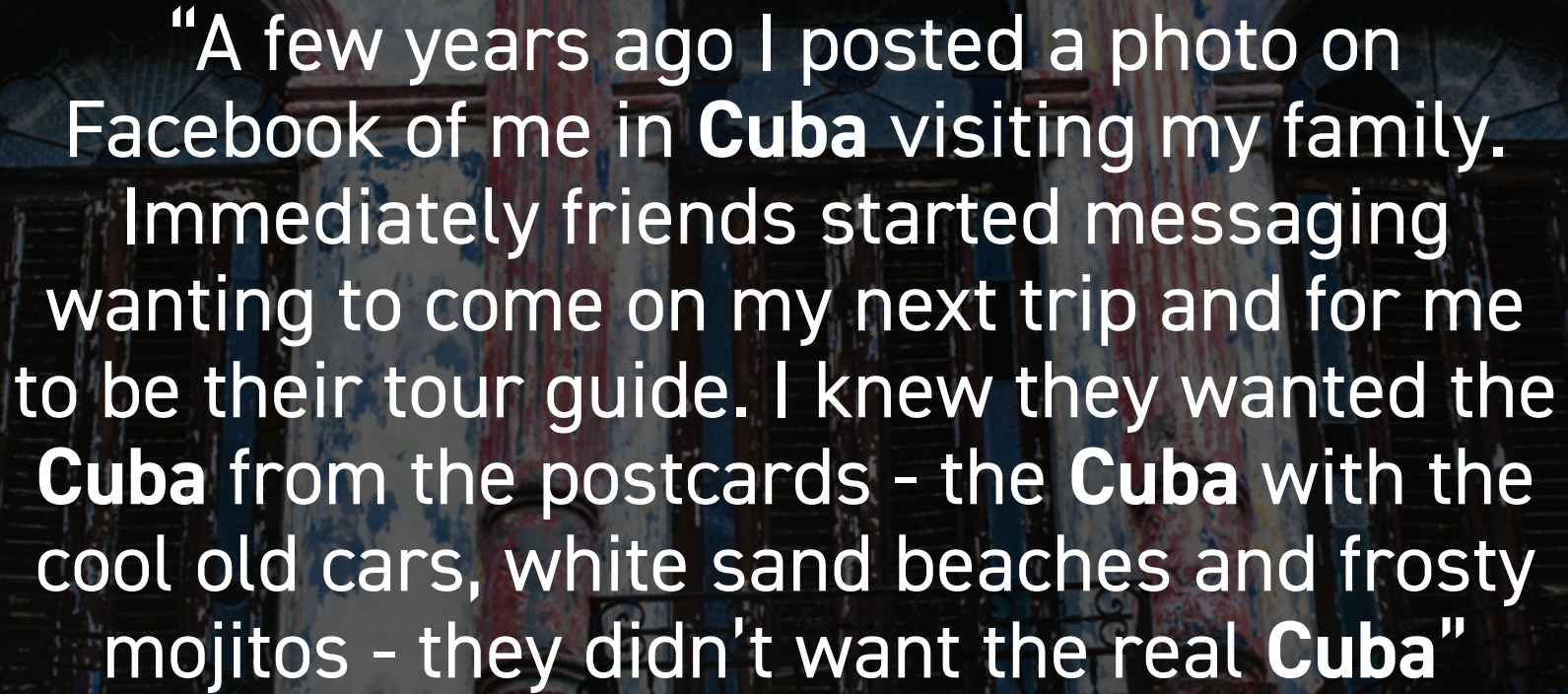
*is a look at*

THE REAL CUBA

TODAY

*the*

PERCEPTION VS. REALITY



“A few years ago I posted a photo on Facebook of me in **Cuba** visiting my family. Immediately friends started messaging wanting to come on my next trip and for me to be their tour guide. I knew they wanted the **Cuba** from the postcards - the **Cuba** with the cool old cars, white sand beaches and frosty mojitos - they didn't want the real **Cuba**”

**Esteban “Steve” Petersen**  
Writer/Director

A vintage, light-colored bus is parked on a city street. Several people are gathered around the open front door, some sitting on the ledge. A red and white striped pole is visible in the foreground on the left. The background shows multi-story buildings. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

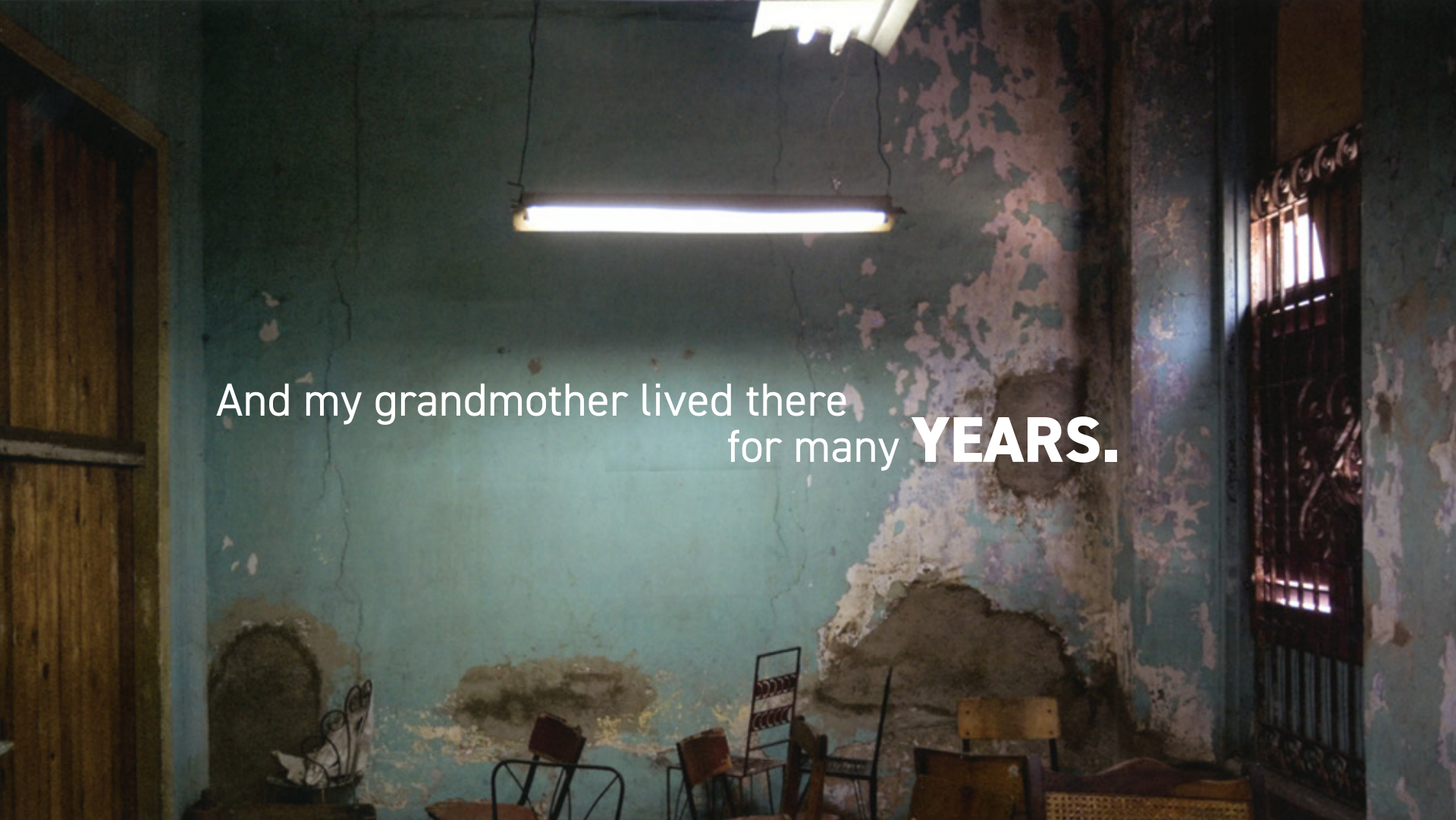
*Director's Statement*  
from **Esteban "Steve" Petersen**

I'm a **Korean-Cuban** American.  
My mother was born in **Cuba**.



Her dad (*my grandfather*)  
was born in **Cuba.**



A photograph of a dilapidated room. The walls are covered in peeling blue and purple paint, revealing a lighter surface underneath. A long, rectangular fluorescent light fixture hangs from the ceiling, casting a bright glow. In the foreground, several chairs are scattered on the floor, some appearing to be made of metal and wood. To the right, there is a window with a decorative metal grille. The overall atmosphere is one of neglect and decay.

And my grandmother lived there  
for many **YEARS.**



I'm the **first** of my family to be  
**born in America...**  
Miami, FL to be exact.

I grew up in a multi-generational house full of family, friends, food, **Cuban** culture and fast-talking Spanish. Relatives that made it to Miami in the 80's were always at the house, so I'd hear stories of life back in **Cuba**. As a kid, while playing with with all my cool toys, I remember hearing my grandparents talk about how my cousins in **Cuba** had nothing.





One time we took one of my grandfathers relatives to a grocery store when they came to Miami for a visit. They broke down crying when they saw aisles of food stacked to the ceiling. **Cuba** started becoming a scary place in my mind.

A young boy with dark skin and short hair is seen from the back, looking out from a window with rusty metal bars. He is wearing a blue and yellow garment. The background is a weathered wall with peeling paint and a brick wall visible through the window.

*Such*  
**BEAUTY**  
*and*  
**SADNESS**  
*in the same place*

As I grew older, I started traveling to **Cuba**, to meet the amazing and wonderful relatives I had not known. I saw first hand that the stories of oppression, desperation, struggle and poverty were all true. It blew my mind that most of the world thought of this 3rd world country as a vacation paradise.





**Cuba** has built lavish resorts, beaches, clubs and restaurants that only tourists can enjoy.



Cubans — are not allowed in. Instead, they are contained to crumbling neighborhoods and homes.

Tourists from all over the world have drunk the Kool-Aid. They flock to take pictures of cars from the '50s kept running with duct tape and lawn mower parts. They flock to take pictures of paint peeling off old buildings infested with mold. They flock to drink Mojitos made by people who couldn't afford one, even with a week's pay.



EN CADA

# REVOLUCION

# WHAT REVOLUTION?





Many friends have reached out to me in recent years excited about their vacation to the island nation. They want me, their Cuban friend, to give them fun recommendations. Some even want me to join them to show them around.

But, I don't think they'd like to sleep on a fold out plastic table in my aunt's house or walk around in my cousin's cinder block home whose floors get so hot in the day you can't walk barefoot. They want to experience the photos in the brochures.





Being raised Cuban and growing up in the US I have a unique perspective on this situation.

My family in Cuba, has given me an even deeper insight.



# INNOCENCE

A person is captured mid-jump over a dark, low wall. They are wearing a patterned tank top and dark shorts. Their arms are raised in the air. The background is a vibrant sunset over the ocean, with the sun low on the horizon. Large splashes of blue water are visible on both sides of the person, creating a sense of joy and freedom. The sky is filled with soft, colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue.

# HAPPINESS

A young man and woman are sitting on a concrete ledge on a rooftop, kissing. The man is on the left, wearing a white t-shirt and dark shorts. The woman is on the right, wearing a red and black top and purple pants. They are both looking at each other. The background shows a clear blue sky, power lines, and a white building. The word "LOVE" is written in large, bold, white capital letters across the center of the image. To the right, a black leather chair is partially visible.

**LOVE**

**ESCAPE**





# LIFE FINDS A WAY



[\*\*CLICK HERE\*\*](#)

TO SEE SOME OF THE REAL ISSUES IN CUBA TODAY THAT INSPIRED THE FILM.

**vi•va** /'vēvə/  
*exclamation*

1. Long live! (used to express acclaim or support for a specified person or thing.)

## The Location

Cartagena, Colombia visually doubles for Cuba in nearly every way. From the beautiful city center and the historic Spanish castles to the picturesque seawall and run down neighborhoods. When I scouted the city and surrounding areas I found it to be quite secure. So much so that safety was not a concern for me and I was able to completely focus on producing the project. And that's the environment I want for everyone involved so we can do our best work. Security and safety of our cast and crew is my top priority.

Furthermore, Colombia, specifically Cartagena, has emerged in recent years as a burgeoning production community with resources readily available. Here are some recent projects that have been shot in Cartagena and Colombia, where we will be making **VIVA**:



Our Colombian production services company, **CUMBIA FILMS**, has worked on many of these projects. In addition, we have security in our budget and Cumbia works exclusively with three security providers that have verified credentials with foreign film studios.

## Incredible Location

<https://www.pulzo.com/entretenimiento/will-smith-exalta-su-paso-por-cartagena-con-nuevo-video-PP501645>

*Esteban "Steve" Petersen*  
WRITER / DIRECTOR

**Esteban "Steve" Petersen** is a Korean-Cuban-American, Emmy-award winning director. Over the past 17 years he has won many accolades for his work as a commercial director. He has also helmed long form projects for Discovery, National Geographic and AMC.

Almost every year at the Promax Awards he has won a Gold or Silver and he was a part of the 2012 SHOOT New Directors Showcase. In 2015 he brought home an Emmy for his show FUTURE CATS. And in 2003, Steve co-founded Big Machine in Los Angeles – a production company staffed with an award winning CGI/visual effects team.

[DIRECTOR WEBSITE](#) | [IMDB](#) | [LINKEDIN](#) | [INSTAGRAM](#)

*Thomas Scott Stanton*  
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY / PRODUCER

**Thomas Scott Stanton** is an award-winning cinematographer, artist, photographer, and filmmaker with a unique artistic approach to storytelling and collaboration. His ability to capture powerful imagery while still focusing on the emotional context of the characters and story has garnered much attention. Some of the notable features Stanton has shot over the past few years include All About Nina, Take Me to the River, Growing Up Smith, The Lookalike, Silverlake and the upcoming Crown Vic. Several of which have been honored by prestigious film festivals including Sundance, Tribeca, Seattle and Camerimage. One of Stanton's most popular film's, Benji, can currently be seen on Netflix.

*Gersh*  
AGENCY

**The Gersh Agency** (“Gersh”) is a talent and literary agency established in 1949 by Phil Gersh, based in Beverly Hills, California and New York City. The Gersh Agency is the sixth largest talent agency in the United States. Gersh has remained one of the most recognizable names in the business for over seven decades. With over 200 employees and offices in Beverly Hills and New York, Gersh maintains fourteen full-service departments: Talent, Feature Literary, TV Literary, Film Finance, Books, Comedy, Theatre, Below-The-Line, Alternative, Digital, Commercial Production, Commercial Endorsements and Global Branding. In addition to the aforementioned, the agency’s roster of clients includes award-winning actors, writers, producers, directors and below-the-line talent in film, television, new media, broadcast and stage as well as literary.

**THANK YOU!**

**Gersh**

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