

What Makes a Nemea Film

The Voice.

A production company with a voice is not defined by what it makes — it is defined by how what it makes feels. This document does not describe archetypes, templates or formulas. It describes a sensibility: the common nerve that must run through every Nemea film, regardless of genre, country, budget or language.

Budget Cap

\$5M USD

Slate

3–4 / year

Method

Curatorial

Territories

MX · US · CA

Horizon

10 years

01

The Spirit.

The Invisible Thread

A Nemea film is recognized by a specific tension — the one between classical craft and modern unease.

We do not make films that feel like other people's films. We make films that share a nerve — a way of being in the world.

Our films are narratively reliable: they are built by people who know what they are doing. They have rhythm, structure, characters, scenes. They are not academic experiments or visual festivals without stories. **Craft is non-negotiable.**

But they are also morally restless: they do not offer easy comfort, they do not end where they are supposed to, they do not leave the viewer in peace. The ending of a Nemea film stays with you a few days longer than you expected.

That is the tension. **Craft that calms, content that destabilizes.** A viewer enters a Nemea film thinking they know what they are about to see — and leaves realizing that something has shifted.

If a film leaves you exactly where it found you, **it is not a Nemea.**

If it leaves you confused but without respect for your time, **it is not either.**

A Nemea moves you without mistreating you. That is the contract.

The Qualities.

A Nemea film does not need all of them — but it must have at least three. **These are qualities of sensibility, not of genre or content.** They can appear in a comedy, a thriller, an intimate drama, or an epic. What matters is that they are there.

01

Intelligence without condescension.

Nemea films **assume the viewer is up to it.** They do not underline, do not explain, do not repeat. They trust that the audience can read subtext, hold ambiguity, and complete what is missing.

This does not mean being dark or difficult — it means being precise. The scene ends when it ends, not when the viewer "got it."

Feels like — being spoken to as an adult.

02

Humor that unsettles.

Nemea films are never **emotionally monochrome.** Even the darkest ones have humor. Even the funniest ones have pain.

It is not comic relief or tragicomedy. It is something stranger: moments where you are not sure whether to laugh. Humor as a form of honesty, not escape.

Feels like — laughing and then asking yourself why.

03

Characters with real agency.

Nemea protagonists **make decisions**. They are not victims of their context nor symbols of a social thesis. They act, err, insist, change their minds.

They can be poor, rich, marginal, central. But they are never reducible to their circumstance. The character always exceeds what the circumstance explains.

Feels like — meeting someone, not reading about them.

04

Form with intention.

In a Nemea film, **how it is made says something**. Framing, tempo, editing, sound — none of it is neutral. They are decisions.

It does not have to be experimental. It can be invisible, classical, transparent. But it is thought through. It is never the passive result of filming what was in the script.

Feels like — knowing someone decided everything.

05

Chance as an ally.

Nemea films **leave room for the unexpected**. Characters exist in a world where things happen — coincidences, accidents, lucky breaks, bad moments.

Not everything occurs to mean something. Some things happen simply because they happen. That is the difference between a screenplay and life. The film needs a little of the second.

Feels like — watching something alive, not something designed.

06

A specific texture.

Every Nemea film has a **unique texture** — a smell, a color, a weight. It feels like a real place, even if fictional. It feels like an era, even if timeless.

This is not genre world-building. It is something humbler: the conviction that this story could only happen here, like this, with these people.

Feels like — remembering a place you have never been.

The Breadth.

Nemea has no format. It has a sensibility. A Nemea can be a loud thriller or a whispered drama, a black comedy or an intimate tragedy, a Mexican film in Spanish or a Canadian one in English. Geography, genre, size — all are containers. The voice is the content.

Operating Rule

A slate of ten Nemea films should **not** look like ten variations of the same model. It should look like ten profoundly different films that share a recognizable nerve. If two projects feel too similar, one is dropped.

A sample — not exhaustive — of what could fit under the Nemea voice. These are possible examples, not fixed categories. The only thing that unites them is the sensibility, not the form.

<p># Contained</p> <p>A room thriller.</p> <p>A conversation that unravels over 90 minutes. Intensity through discipline, not production value. Can be in any language, in any country.</p>	<p># Ensemble</p> <p>A black-comedy chorus.</p> <p>Five people whose lives cross because of one absurd event. Fargo as a model, not an imitation. Comedy rhythm, tragedy weight.</p>	<p># Domestic</p> <p>A family portrait.</p> <p>A weekend. Four family members. Something never said out loud. Drama in precision, not in event.</p>

<p># Landscape</p> <p>A story in the terrain.</p> <p>The desert, the coast, the mountain, the forest. The place is a character. Can be western, road movie, survival thriller — what matters is the relation to space.</p>	<p># Noir</p> <p>A contemporary neo-noir.</p> <p>Someone has a problem. Someone else makes it worse. Genre as structure, content as novelty. Could happen in Mexico City, Vancouver, New Orleans.</p>	<p># Romance</p> <p>A love story with nerve.</p> <p>Not a traditional rom-com — closer to Before Sunrise or The Worst Person in the World. Romance as an excuse for a character study.</p>
<p># Fable</p> <p>A disciplined fable.</p> <p>An impossible premise treated with total rigor. Lanthimos as structure. The absurd working through seriousness, not through irony.</p>	<p># Hybrid</p> <p>A narrative documentary.</p> <p>The line between fiction and documentary blurred on purpose. Real subjects, constructed situations. Sean Baker as reference, without formula.</p>	<p># Period</p> <p>An intimate period piece.</p> <p>Not the classical period drama. A specific era filmed with modern intimacy. Few characters, one contemporary question, one historical anchor.</p>

04

The Library.

These films are not models to imitate — they are **examples of the sensibility** Nemea pursues. They are profoundly different in genre, country, and budget. But all share the nerve that defines the voice. When we doubt whether a project is Nemea, we compare against this library.

# Film	# Year	# What it teaches Nemea
Fargo	1996	That a tragedy can be told with comic rhythm without betraying its weight. That hybrid tone does not dilute — it intensifies.
Y tu Mamá También	2001	That extreme cultural specificity produces universality, not provincialism. That intimacy can have scale.
No Country for Old Men	2007	That classical craft and modern unease are not enemies. You can tell stories impeccably without resolving them.

# Film	# Year	# What it teaches Nemea
The Florida Project	2017	That poverty can be filmed without miserabilism . The difference is taking characters seriously as people, not as causes.
The Killing of a Sacred Deer	2017	That formal discipline can make impossible premises work. Rigor as a generator of the absurd, not a container.
The Banshees of Inisherin	2022	That a small fable can hold large ideas. Intimate scale does not limit — it permits.
Uncut Gems	2019	That bold casting can redefine an actor. That well-constructed anxiety is cinematic language.
Anora	2024	That a sub-\$6M film can win everything if it has real narrative intelligence . Proof that the model works now.
Amores Perros	2000	That structural ambition combined with emotional brutality can open a market. The moment we want to recover.
Aftersun	2022	That memory itself can be a cinematic structure. That a debut can carry the weight of a decade of filmmaking if the voice is already formed.
Hell or High Water	2016	That classical genre — neo-western, thriller, noir — remains a perfect vehicle for contemporary ideas.
A Real Pain	2024	That two characters, one location, one internal conflict, can be more cinematic than any studio production — if the script has nerve.

05

The Filter.

Not a rigid rubric. **Seven questions** we ask of every project. If the majority cannot be answered with conviction, the project is not Nemea — even if it is good. Nemea does not

produce all the good cinema in the world. It produces cinema with a specific voice.

01

Can I imagine a specific scene that does not exist in any other film?

Not the concept, not the theme — a scene. A moment with people doing something in a place. If the film in my head resembles ten films I have already seen, it is not Nemea yet.

YES → An image impossible to confuse.

02

Does the director have a personal relationship with this material?

Not necessarily autobiographical. **Personal**. Something only this person can make. If another director could direct it just as well, it probably is not worth making.

YES → The director is not interchangeable.

03

Is there something that makes me productively uncomfortable about the project?

A difficult premise, an irredeemable character, a tone that resists categorization, an ending that offers no comfort. **If everything feels comfortable from the start**, it probably will not surprise the audience either.

YES → Real friction, not solemnity.

04

Can I articulate why this film is not another film?

If I can only describe it as "it is like X but with Y," maybe that is fine — but it needs a third element I cannot explain through comparables. **The well-executed unclassifiable is what lasts.**

YES → A residue that cannot be explained.

05

Are the characters smarter than the thesis?

If the script treats characters as mouthpieces for an idea, it fails. If the characters exceed any argument the film could be making, **it works**. This is the most important test against miserabilism, pamphlet, or thesis-cinema.

YES → Characters cannot be summarized.

06

Is the craft equal to the ambition?

The vision can be large or small — but the technical execution (camera, sound, editing, performance) has to be impeccable for the scale of the film. **Zero tolerance** for vision without craft.

YES → The team can deliver what it promises.

07

In ten years, will this film still have a reason to exist?

Not: will it be a hit? Rather: will someone discover it, recommend it, revisit it? Nemea films do not live off their year of release. They live off their decade. **Value lives in the library, not the box office.**

YES → Something irrepeatable worth preserving.

06

What We Avoid.

A list of signals that tell us, often in the first thirty seconds of a conversation, that a project is not Nemea. Not red flags of taste — red flags of **laziness, imitation, or confusion**

about what a film is for. If a pitch, deck, or conversation hits two or more of these, we pass.

<p>01 "It's X meets Y."</p> <p>The laziest pitch in cinema. A film that can be summarized as an arithmetic of other films has no reason to exist. When someone says "it's Parasite meets Uncut Gems," they are admitting they could not explain the film on its own terms. Reference is useful; arithmetic is not. Every Nemea project must survive being described without reference to any other film.</p>	<p>02 The theme mistaken for the film.</p> <p>Theme matters. Theme drives narrative decisions, shapes tone, determines what a scene is really about. But a film is not its theme. A project pitched only as "a film about grief" or "an exploration of identity" is a project that has confused its engine for its vehicle. We want projects with strong themes — and stronger scenes, characters, and structures that embody them. <i>Theme as compass, not as summary.</i></p>
<p>03 The opening that does not trust itself.</p> <p>"In 2019, the Mexican government..." — any film that opens with text explaining historical or social context is announcing that it does not trust its own dramatization. A Nemea film earns its opening through action: it starts in media res, with a specific person doing something concrete in a place. The context reveals itself through behavior, not through a paragraph of exposition. If the world cannot be established in the first scene through craft, the script is not ready.</p>	<p>04 The festival-calibrated ending.</p> <p>The long static shot. The character walking into an empty landscape. The final freeze-frame on an inscrutable face. There is a catalog of endings that signal "serious cinema" without earning them. A Nemea ending must feel inevitable in retrospect and surprising in the moment — not pulled from the repertoire.</p>
<p>05 The director who cannot name their comparables.</p> <p>Ask a director what three recent films shaped theirs. If they cannot answer — or if they say "I do not watch other films, I want to be original" — they are either arrogant or unaware. Both are disqualifying. Every serious filmmaker has a canon they are arguing with.</p>	<p>06 The deck that borrows gravitas.</p> <p>When a visual treatment leans heavily on stills from the canonical masters of slow cinema, the director may be trying to borrow weight instead of generating it. References are essential — we all learn from the greats. But a deck should mostly contain the director's own visual thinking, not an anthology of other people's frames. Reference is useful. Hiding behind reference is not.</p>

07 The misery diagnosis.

Films whose central function is to describe the mechanisms of a social problem — poverty, violence, corruption, migration — with journalistic accuracy and dramatic flatness. **A film is not a New York Times article with actors.** If the audience knows in minute five what the film is saying and how it will end, the film has already failed. Hopelessness is a valid emotional territory; hopelessness as a thesis is not.

08 The symbol character.

"She represents the migrant experience." "He is a symbol of corruption." **The moment a character becomes representative of a category, they stop being a character.** Specific people can carry universal weight. Generic symbols cannot carry anything.

09 The international-location tourism.

Scripts that require shooting in multiple countries when the story does not demand it. **Location is not decoration.** If a film could just as well be set in one city but is set across three "for atmosphere," the atmosphere is the real project — and that is not enough.

10 The "make it like [auteur]" pitch.

A specific sub-case of the meets-and-influences trap. **Nobody should be trying to make someone else's film.** Admiring a filmmaker is essential; inheriting their voice is always a mistake. A director's job is to learn from their heroes and then make something only they could make.

11 The project that needs \$5M-plus to work.

If the pitch requires a budget above our ceiling to function, **it is not our project.** Not because we cannot afford it, but because budget discipline is part of our voice. A film that cannot be made for less than \$8M is a different kind of film — one that belongs to someone else.

12 The moral certainty.

Films that know, from page one, who the villain is and who the victim is. **Moral certainty is the opposite of drama.** Drama lives in the space where the audience does not know who to side with — and the film does not tell them.

13 The pitch with no humor.

Every serious film has some humor somewhere. **A pitch that is entirely solemn is a pitch from someone who does not understand tone.** Even the bleakest Nemea film has a laugh in it, somewhere. If the director cannot find one while pitching, there will not be one in the film.

14 The project that wants to be important.

Importance is a byproduct, never a goal. **Films that try to be important end up being pompous. Films that try to be good sometimes end up being important.** When a project announces its own weight, it has already collapsed under it.

Nemea Is. Is Not.

A voice is defined as much by what it includes as by what it rejects. These two columns are not rules — they are the contour of the sensibility. A project can break one line if the others hold firm. But if it breaks several, it is not Nemea.

Nemea Is

Curatorial. Every film is a conscious choice, not one of many.

Plural in form. Thrillers, comedies, dramas, noirs, fables — all can be Nemea.

International by nature. Geography is container, not category.

Impeccable in craft. Camera, sound, editing, performance at the level of the best world cinema.

Independent in spirit. The director has final cut. Always.

Small by design. Three to four films per year is the ceiling, not the floor.

Disciplined by budget. Sub-\$5M is discipline that generates creativity, not limitation.

Patient with talent. We seek directors who will make five films with us, not one.

Nemea Is Not

A **genre company.** We are not defined by thriller, horror, drama, or comedy.

A **regional company.** We are not "the Mexican company" nor "the Latin company."

A **festival company.** Festivals are platform, not goal.

A **pure auteur company.** We do not make hermetic cinema no one watches.

A **commercial company.** We do not make cinema any other company could make.

A **content factory.** Volume is the opposite of voice.

A **prestige company.** We do not chase Oscars. We chase films that last.

A **company with a formula.** If anyone can predict what we will do, something is wrong.

The proof that Nemea has a voice will be this: someone will watch a film without knowing it is ours — and suspect it anyway.

Not from the logo at the start. Not from the director. Not from the genre. From **something in the texture** — in how a scene breathes, in how a character refuses to be summarized, in how the ending refuses to console.

When an audience can say "this feels like a Nemea" without having seen the credit, without having read any interview, we will have won. That intuitive recognition is the only real indicator that a company has a voice.

External metrics will come on their own if this is achieved: **sales, festivals, criticism, catalog**. But all of that is consequence. The cause is the voice.

And the voice is not built with rules. It is built with **consistent decisions over time**: which projects we say yes to, which we say no to, which directors we work with more than once, what kind of ending we accept, what kind of scene we refuse to film.

Every Nemea film is a vote on what Nemea is. After twenty or thirty consistent votes, **we no longer have to explain what we are**. The catalog says it.

We are not trying to be the biggest, most awarded, or most profitable company. We are trying to be the most recognizable — the one whose voice, after ten years, cannot be confused with anyone else's.

