Award Winning
PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER
Feature Screenplay
CEREBRAL
The Better You Get…
…The Worse You Become!
TEXMEX FILMWORKS PRESENTS CEREBRAL STARRING SARA CASASNOVAS
BRIAN VILLALOBOS HECTOR ROLAND URIBE JUNE GRIFFIN GARCIA AND LUCERO GARCIA
MUSIC BY MARK ANDRUSHKO EDITORS ALEX AVILA AND DAVID VOX AVILA PRODUCTION DESIGNER VICTORIA TERRELL
CASTING BY JUNE GRIFFIN GARCIA CASTING EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS IRVING RONDON
MARCOS DE LEON & HORTENSIA PALOMARES GREGORY TURLEY AND ALEX MONTES
PRODUCED BY ALEX AVILA SUSAN JASSO ANTONIO GARCIA AND DAVID VOX AVILA
WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY ALEX AVILA.

CEREBRAL

Running Time:	**115 minutes**
Written & Directed By:	**Alex Avila**
Produced By:	**Alex Avila**
Co-Produced By:	**Susan Jasso**
	Antonio Garcia
	David Vox Avila
Production Company:	**TexMex FilmWorks**
	Austin, Texas
Edited by:	**Alex Avila**
	David Vox Avila
Cinematographer:	**Antonio Garcia**
Composer:	**Mark Andrushko** (Delicate Noise)

LOGLINE

Respected professor and family man Ruben Esteban suffers a traumatic brain injury and nearly dies. At first, his family is relieved that he survives. But, as his wife Sonia discovers, the more he recovers, the darker and more dangerous his new personality becomes in this realistic psychological thriller.

SYNOPSIS

Ruben Esteban was a respected college professor and a loving husband and father. One night, while walking home from work, he saw one of his students being assaulted and intervened. The assailant turned on Ruben, and he suffered a traumatic brain injury that nearly cost him his life.

At first, Ruben's wife Sonia and daughter Jessica are simply relieved that he survives. But as Ruben recuperates, Sonia notices a change in his personality. A darker, more aggressive side of him starts to emerge, replacing the loving husband and father they once knew. Despite Sonia’s best efforts, Ruben's mental state deteriorates after much struggle.

As Ruben grows stronger physically, his mental state worsens. Finally, Ruben, in his damaged mental state, starts to terrorize his family, forcing Sonia to take drastic steps to protect herself and her daughter.

OUR STORY

TexMex FilmWorks was created in 2021 by filmmaker Alex Avila specifically to create compelling stories without the tired, stereotypical depictions of Latinos historically found in film and television.

Noting that in Texas it is not unusual to see Latino lawyers, doctors, professors, business professionals, college students, and middle-class families, **TexMex FilmWorks** has as its mission to realistically create films which openly depict this reality while remaining focused on stories with universal appeal.

Consequently, we vow to never make a film project which predominantly features gangs, maids, criminals, drug addicts, cartel members, and other Latino stereotypes traditionally perpetuated by Hollywood films. While a viable segment of the Latino population identify as immigrants, we tire of constantly being portrayed as all immigrants in a nation where many of us have been here for generations.

TexMex FilmWorks is dedicated to sophisticated story-telling and award-winning productions.

Sara Casasnovas

as *Sonia Shahin-Esteban*

Sara Casasnovas delivers a *tour de force* performance as Sonia Shahin-Esteban, attorney, mother, and wife to Professor Ruben Esteban. When Ruben's life hangs in the balance following a traumatic head injury (TBI), Sonia struggles to hold her family together, even as her own mother tries to drive them apart. Despite her efforts, Sonia is beside herself watching her husband's personality grow darker as his brain recuperates from injury. In the end, Sonia is forced to take drastic measures to protect herself and her family from the man she loves.

Casasnovas was born May 3, 1984 in Ourense, Galicia, Spain. She is a veteran of Spanish television and theatre. She has won film acting awards in a number of European festivals including "Best Actress" at the following: Corto Festival DUNAS of Fuerteventura (Canary Islands, Spain 2010); Kimera International Film Festival of Campobasso (Italy 2010); Festival El Sector of Madrid (Spain 2010), European Festival of La Solana of Ciudad Real (Spain 2010), and Festival European of Cinema of Castilla La Mancha (Spain 2010).

She has won awards for her theatre work as well and is known in Spain for the TV series "Amar En Tiempos Revueltos" (or Hospital Central).

Casasnovas is an actress, writer, and director.

Director Alex Avila quotes on Sara Casasnovas

"I was searching for our 'Sonia' for a couple of years. And I wasn't going to move forward with this project until we found her. I needed an extraordinary actress that could carry our movie.

"I spent months trying out actresses in Texas and I did receive quite a few intelligent performances. This was not surprising as the talent level in Texas is much higher than most regions, especially in the Austin – San Antonio – Houston corridor.

"I literally saw more than 80 audition tapes from sight readings I had sent from actor inquiries, but as soon as I saw Sara's tape, I immediately saw something I hadn't seen in other auditions.

"Sara has a fire within her that she brings to her characters. You can see and feel it on film. I wanted that fire for Sonia. I wanted Sara for Cerebral*."*

– Alex Avila, Writer/Director

Brian Villalobos
as ***Ruben Esteban***

Brian Villalobos gives a powerful and nuanced performance as Professor Ruben Esteban, a respected educator, former journalist, and family man, who suffers a traumatic head injury. While intervening in an attack on a student, Ruben's life is permanently altered after the attacker turns on him. Although he tries to recover and return to the family life he once enjoyed, Ruben finds himself losing to a dark and growing personality that evolves throughout his physical recovery.

Brian is a bilingual actor and performer from Texas with a career spanning over two decades. He has won numerous acting awards appearing in over 100 films, commercials, and stage productions, demonstrating his adaptability across various mediums.

Brian's work has been featured on platforms like HBOMAX, Netflix, Showtime, Amazon, Shudder, as well as cable and network television, including the Super Bowl. He has worked alongside recognized artists such as Jesse Plemons, Richard Linklater, Thomas Haden Church, Zachary Levi, Bruce Dern, Carrie-Anne Moss, Catherine Hardwicke, and Shaquille O'Neal.

Director Alex Avila quotes on Brian Villalobos

"I knew early on that I wanted Brian to play our lead character of Ruben. And early on, he turned down this role – twice."

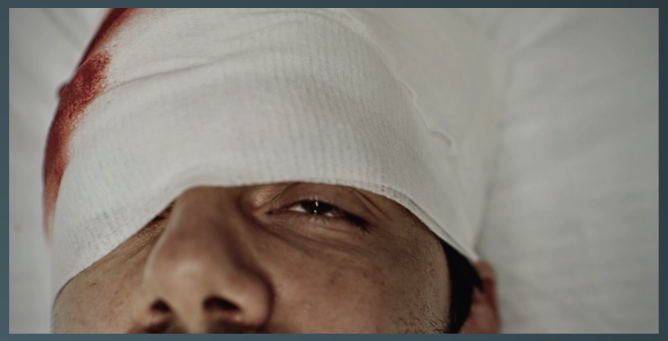
"I kept hearing from actors that the role was something they weren't sure was for them. And I understood. This role requires an actor to go to some dark and even ugly places. It's intimidating.

"Lucky for us, two years after turning the role down, Brian was open to having some conversations about playing Ruben.

"I could say something campy like 'the third time was the charm,' but the truth is I tried a different approach. In short, I challenged Brian to boldly stretch beyond his comfort level as an actor.

"Lucky for Cerebral, *Brian was willing to go there. And he delivers."*

– Alex Avila, Writer/Director



Lucero Garcia as ***Jessica Esteban***

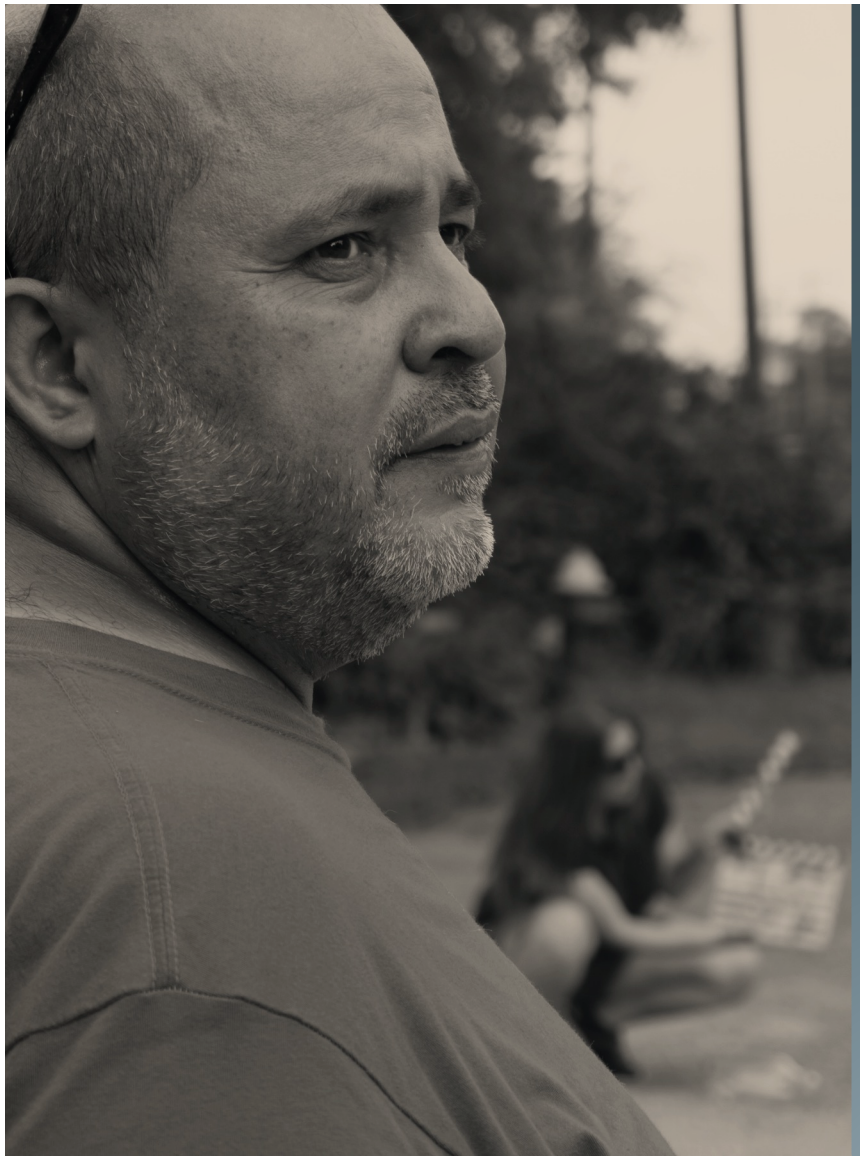
Lucero Garcia makes her supporting actress feature debut as Jessica Esteban. Jessica watches as her father nearly dies then becomes a very different man. Lucero was born in Tamaulipas, Mexico and raised in San Antonio, Texas. She has been performing since she was 6 years old and made headlines as the lead performer in the award-winning stage play *Mariachi Girl* where she received the Alamo Theatre Arts Council Globe Award for *Best Lead Actress in a Musical.* Lucero is now a Psychology major at Texas State University.

Hector Roland Uribe as ***Dr. Marcus***

Hector Roland Uribe is generally the harbinger of bad news as Dr. Marcus, trying to document Ruben's head injury and recovery and interacting with the Esteban family. Hector has been featured in a dozen feature films including the Coen Brother's classic *No Country for Old Men*. Hector is usually seen portraying character roles. He's the winner of the Queen of Palms Best Supporting Actor in *Tejano*, a film by David Blue Garcia. A retired attorney and former Texas State Senator, Hector studied Elizabethan Theatre as a Drama major before graduating from Law School at the University of Miami. He currently resides in Austin, Texas.

June Griffin Garcia as ***Tonya Shahin***

June Griffin Garcia excels as Tonya Shahin, loving mother of Sonia and consistent critic of Sonia's husband Ruben. Tonya had married a wealthy attorney for both prestige and social standing, none of which she saw in Sonya's marriage to Ruben. As a multilingual actress, June has booked over 80 films and TV series in a panoply of ages, dialects and ethnicities. She currently teaches ESL full-time to adult refugees in San Antonio, Texas, and any spare time is devoted to salsa dancing



Writer & Director, Alex Avila

A.J. "Alex" Avila, a Texas native, holds multiple degrees from the University of Texas at Austin. With a B.S. in Radio-TV-Film (1994), Avila's career began in journalism and pivoted towards film and media. He spent over a decade as a national radio producer for *NPR's Latino USA*, earning numerous journalism awards. He holds an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Journalism and has been a university professor since 2009.

In 1993, Avila co-founded and co-directed the Chicano/Latino Film Forum in Austin, connecting Latino filmmakers with audiences from 1993-1999.

As a writer/producer, Avila's feature filmmaking premiere came with *Closer to Bottom* (2017), winning "Best Texas Feature" at the inaugural Austin Indie Fest in 2017. His directorial feature debut, *Vecinos: Love thy Neighbor* (2021), won a "Gold Remi" Award at the WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival, and an Audience Award at Cine Las Americas in Austin, plus other festival awards. His latest screenplay, a Sci-Fi feature titled *A.I. Dad* won "Best Screenplay" at the 2025 San Antonio Film Festical.

As producer, Avila put together the team in 2023 that completed production of *Cerebral*, a psychological thriller set to premiere in 2024. *Cerebral* had earlier success as a screenplay in national screenwriting competitions. Avila's various screenplays have placed in over two dozen screenwriting competitions nationwide.

CO-PRODUCERS

CEREBRAL Producers (l to r) David Vox Avila, Susan Jasso, Antonio Garcia, and Alex Avila.

Susan Jasso *Co-Producer*

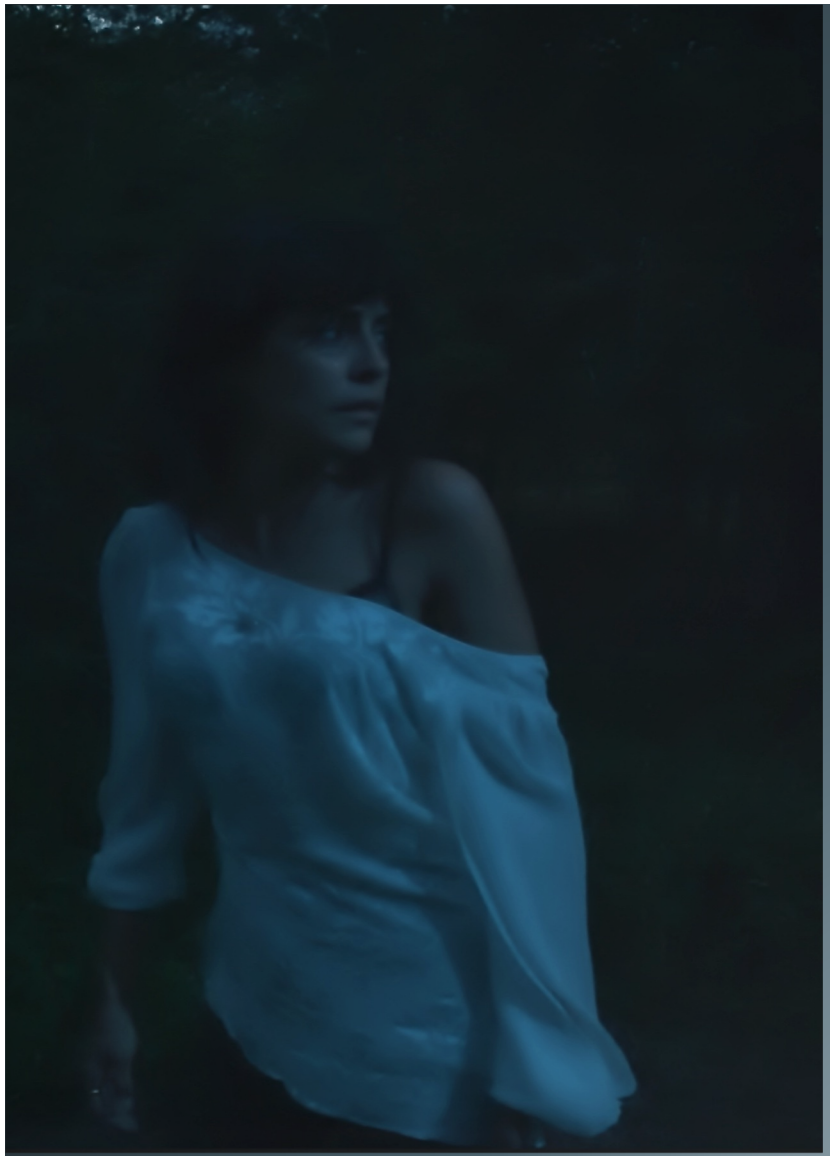
Susan Jasso is a veteran of many feature films produced in Texas, mostly as an Assistant Director. Her Assistant Director credits include *Selena* (1997), *Sin City* (2005), *Machete* (2010), *Tree of Life* (2011), *Boyhood* (2014), *Nashville* season 1 (2012), and more than a dozen other major films. After several years outside of the industry, Susan decided to return to filmmaking in a more creative role where she says she wants to help tell authentic Latino stories.

David Vox Avila *Co-Producer*

As an independent filmmaker, David has written, directed, shot, and produced dozens of short films, documentaries, music videos, and teamed on an award-winning web series. He is well versed in filmmaking and podcast production, and experienced in working with actors, budgets, and intense timelines.

Antonio Garcia *Co-Producer/Director of Photography*

Antonio Garcia trained with Steve Mimms at the Austin School of Film and has amassed a diverse experience in film production include First Assistant Camera for *Vecinos: Love Thy Neighbor* (2021), Director of Photography for *It's Over: Nephilim* (2016), and Director of Photography for *Closer to Bottom* (2017), in addition to crewing up in various capacities for multiple shorts and music videos in the Austin area.



Award-Winning Screenplay

Originally written in 2017, the screenplay version of ***Cerebral*** placed in 13 major screenplay competitions nationally from 2018-2022. Feedback from those competitions was vital in revising and improving the script, culminating in a "Top 10" finalist placing in Summer 2022 for *Table Read My Screenplay* (out of hundreds of screenplays.)

ISA Table Read My Screenplay Genre Competition TOP 10 SUMMER 2022

SEMIFINALIST Filmmatic Horror Screenplay Awards Season 7

EMERGING SCREENWRITERS QUARTER-FINALIST Emerging Screenwriters Genre Screenplay Competition 2021

Quarter-Finalist Page Turner Screenplays 2021

FIRST 15 QUARTERFINALIST 2021

Semifinalist Table Read my Screenplay 2020

FINALIST FIlmmatic Drama Screenplay Awards 2019

FINALIST Oaxaca FilmFest 2019

QUARTER-FINALIST Los Angeles International Screenplay Awards 2019

SEMIFINALIST HCF Screenplay Competition 2019

QUARTER-FINALIST All Genre Screenplay Contest 2019

Quarter-Finalist scriptapalooza 2019

QUARTER-FINALIST SCREENCRAFT FILM FUND 2018

CREDITS

Written & Directed by:	**Alex Avila**
Co-Produced by:	**Susan Jasso**
	David Vox Avila
	Antonio Garcia
Associate Producers:	**Nelda Perez-Avila**
	Willie Quiñones
Director of Photography:	**Antonio Garcia**
Production Designer:	**Victoria Terrell**
Editors:	**Alex Avila**
	David Vox Avila
Music by:	**Mark Andrushko** (Delicate Noise)
Production Sound Recordist:	**Nathan Blaze**
Executive Producers:	**Irving Rondón**
	Marcos de León & Hortensia Palomares
	Gregory Turley
	Alex Montes
	Antonio Garcia
Casting by:	**June Griffin Garcia Casting**

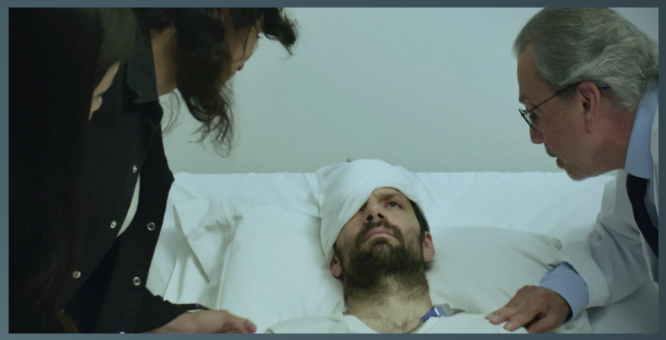
ADDITIONAL CREDITS

UNIT PRODUCTION MANAGER (Hospital Scenes)	**Peter Morales**
ASSISTANT DIRECTORS	**Susan Jasso**
	Manny Garcia
	Victoria Sada
FIRST CAMERA ASSISTANT	**Carlos Lopez Jr.**
2nd CAMERA ASSISTANT	**Santiago Berkley**
SOUND MIXER	**Nathan Blaze**
ADDITIONAL SOUND	**Paul Matthew Lopez**
	Stephen Allen Gutierrez
	David Vox Avila
WARDROBE	**Andrew Jacobi Jeter**
WARDROBE ASSISTANT	**Milena Arias**
SEAMSTRESS	**Lorena Auguste**
SCRIPT SUPERVISOR	**Victoria Sada**
STUNT COORDINATOR	**Mark Anthony Baca**
STUNT UTILITY	**Daniel San**
	Robyn Kennedy
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT	**Abel Salas**

LOCATION COORDINATOR (Maxwell, Texas)	**Laura Benavides**
GRAPHIC DESIGN (& Web)	**Cynthia Manor**
KRAFT SERVICES	**Abel Salas**
	Willie Quiñones
	Michael Greenberg
	Marcos de Leon
FX MAKEUP	**Mackenzie Glenn**
DIALECT COACH	**June Griffin Garcia**
DRONE OPERATOR	**David Vox Avila**
ARTWORK provided by	**Lalo Alcaraz**
ACCOUNTING provided by	**Irving Rondon Business Services** (San Antonio, TX)
INSURANCE PROVIDED BY:	**biBERK Business Insurance**
	Thimble Insurance Services
LEGAL	**Brenda Chavez, Esq.**
ADDITIONAL LEGAL	**David Garcia, Esq.**

CAST

Sonia Shahin-Esteban	**Sara Casasnovas**
Ruben Esteban	**Brian Villalobos**
Dr. Marcus	**Hector Roland Uribe**
Jessica Esteban	**Lucero Garcia**
Tonya Shahin	**June Griffin Garcia**



ADDITIONAL CAST

EDWARD GOODMAN	**Ty McLeod**
DR. LAURA JEFFRIES	**Akasha Villalobos**
ERICA (student)	**Zamira Scattolon**
PRINCIPAL LAMAR	**Stan McDowell**
SIMONE PEARSON	**Peggy Schott**
OLGA PATTERSON	**Bobbie Grace**
PAUL PUGLISI	**Brian Bilica**
MARGO	**JoJanie Moreno**
FLORA	**Karinna Perez Cantu**
MADISON (Assault Victim)	**Lexi Graves**
ASSAILANT	**Dylan Droz**
NURSE TECH DAVID	**Alex Montes**
NURSE RACHEL	**Cynthia Cannon**
DR. DONAHUE	**Shawn Ian Hardee**
NURSE ANGIE	**Michlynn Langlois**
THERAPIST TELLY	**Carolyn Koskan**
PHYSICAL THERAPIST	**Brian Holder**
SARAH (Legal Secretary)	**Judy Lee**
ANITA (School Friend)	**Anna Corona**
YVETTE (School Friend)	**Finn Ralph**
FEATURED EXTRAS	**Eyland Gaddy-Brewer**
	Haley Rondon
	Irving Rondon
	Mary Harder
	Jeffrey Smithwick
	Andrew Jacobi Jeter
	Willie Quiñones
	Abel Salas

CEREBRAL was shot in 6K raw on a Panasonic EVA1 for an anamorphic aspect ratio.

Special Thanks!

National Hispanic Institute	*Maxwell, Texas*
Extreme Force Stunts & Film	*McDade, Texas*
Half-Price Books	*Austin, Texas*
Huston-Tillotson University	*Austin, Texas*
Pompeii Italian Grill	*San Antonio, Texas*
San Marcos Film Commission	*San Marcos, Texas*
EVO Entertainment Group	*Austin, Texas*
Bell & Bell Funeral Home	*San Antonio, Texas*

ALSO:

San Antonio Women's Health Clinic

Nancy de los Santos Reza

Raul Garza

CONTACT INFO:

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Email us for photo stills and BTS photos.

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