

Sound Designer Mario Gutierrez Joins The Final Fight, Bringing Emotional Depth to Todd J. Stein's Powerful True Story

Sound designer Mario Gutierrez believes the best sound design isn't something audiences consciously notice, it's something they feel.

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, July 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- That philosophy became the foundation of his work on *The Final Fight*, the upcoming short film based on the true story of a family's fight against the corrupt guardianship system.

Writer-director Todd J. Stein says bringing Gutierrez onto the project was an easy decision. "From the moment I spoke with Mario, I knew he understood the heart of this film," says Stein. "The *Final Fight* is about family, resilience, and truth, and Mario brought not only incredible talent but genuine passion for those themes. We couldn't be happier to welcome him to the team."



Sound Designer Mario Gutierrez, *The Final Fight*

"Sound design can completely shape how an audience experiences a story," says Gutierrez. "Just like music, it can dictate emotion. Sometimes it's a subtle change in ambience, a clock ticking a little louder, or even silence. Those choices create emotional movement without the audience realizing why."

For Gutierrez, what made *The Final Fight* impossible to pass up wasn't simply the opportunity to craft its sonic landscape, it was the extraordinary truth behind the story. "The honesty of this story is what drew me in," he says. "When you first hear it, you think there's no way it could be real. But it is. It happens to people more often than most realize. I wanted to help tell that story honestly and be part of something that both educates audiences and delivers a powerful cinematic experience."

Throughout production, Gutierrez worked closely with the filmmaking team to preserve that authenticity. His role extended far beyond cleaning dialogue or balancing audio levels. Much of the soundtrack was painstakingly reconstructed, from footsteps and keyboard clicks to entire environments, to create a seamless, immersive world that always serves the story. “People would be surprised how much of what sounds ‘natural’ is actually rebuilt,” Gutierrez explains. “A hallway, a door closing, footsteps, even entire environments are often recreated piece by piece so everything feels real.”

Rather than overwhelming scenes with elaborate effects, Gutierrez embraced a predominantly diegetic approach, allowing sounds that naturally exist within the world of the film to heighten realism and emotional connection.



Mario Gutierrez, Sound Designer *The Final Fight*

Stein says Gutierrez’s approach perfectly complemented the film’s commitment to authenticity. “As an independent filmmaker, every person you bring onto a project matters,” Stein says. “Mario is the kind of artist who elevates everyone around him. His attention to detail and commitment

to authenticity helped shape the emotional experience of the film in ways audiences will feel, even if they never consciously notice it.”

“

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Mario Gutierrez, Sound Designer The Final Fight

Among the film’s biggest technical challenges were sequences requiring extensive restoration and reconstruction because of varying microphone setups and complex environments. “The hallway scene and one of the

outdoor sequences were especially challenging,” Gutierrez recalls. “Matching different microphones, rebuilding ambience, cleaning dialogue, and making everything blend naturally required a lot of detailed work. Those scenes are some of the work I’m most proud of.”

Gutierrez credits the collaborative spirit of the production for making the creative process successful. “What made this team special was communication and trust,” he says. “Everyone was honest, collaborative, and gave each person the freedom to do what they do best.”

Ultimately, his goal was simple: never distract from the truth at the heart of the film. “I’m glad

that we were able to clean up and level the dialogue so the story could be told without interruption,” says Gutierrez. “When something is this honest, you don’t need to dress it up, you just need to make sure you’re not getting in its way.”

Stein believes that commitment to serving the story is exactly what makes Gutierrez such a valuable collaborator. “Building this film has been about assembling people who genuinely believe in the story we’re telling,” Stein says. “Mario immediately connected with the material, and I was thrilled when he agreed to come aboard. He’s an incredible addition to our team, and his work helps immerse audiences in this true story without ever pulling them out of it.”

As audiences experience *The Final Fight*, Gutierrez hopes the film’s soundscape quietly supports what matters most. “I hope it feels real,” he says. “More than anything, I hope people leave the theater carrying the intensity of the story with them, and realizing that what happens in this film happens to families more often than they think.”

The *Final Fight* tells the true story of a Hollywood producer who returns home to rescue his father from a corrupt guardianship system, discovering that the greatest battle of his life isn’t in Hollywood, it’s for his own family. *The Final Fight* was inspired by a true story chronicled in a cover story of *The New York Times*, *The Fight Of This Old Boxer’s Life Was With His Own Family*, written by journalist John Leland.

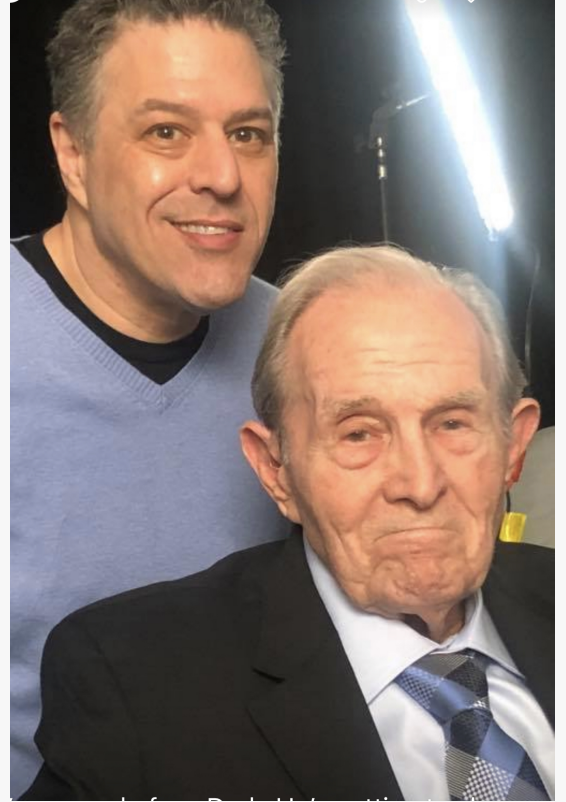


Josh Davis and Tom Hair portray Scott Cohen and Martin Cohen



The Final Fight Cast Promo

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Todd with his father Marvin Stein,
2020

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