

Film Synopsis – 1st Latin American Film Week – 2010

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 15th:

The Man of Two Havanas by Vivien Lesnik Weisman (Cuba-USA, 2007 – 93 min).

“Okay, here's the situation. I was born in Havana. That makes me Cuban. But, I was raised in little Havana (Miami, Florida), which makes me Cuban-American. However, since I don't see Castro as the root of all evil in the universe, nor would I strangle him with my bare hands given the opportunity, I am a little out of step with my tribe. I always have been. And I really don't care. My dad, on the other hand, does care”. Vivien Lesnik.

With a childhood filled with bombings and assassination attempts on her father (legendary journalist and revolutionary Max Lesnik), the filmmaker explores her relationship with him and the Cuba he left behind. Through the prism of a daughter we explore the past, the present, and the nature of social responsibility and personal sacrifice. The movie contains highly controversial top-secret audiotapes of a CIA trained Cuban exile Terrorist who is in the middle of a trial and incarcerated by Homeland Security. His trial puts the Bush administration's War on Terror on trial as well. The audiotape excerpts are from an NYT reporter who refuses to turn over these tapes. The never before heard audiotapes will be hotly debated in the media.

Vivien Lesnik Weisman was born in Havana, Cuba. She graduated from Barnard College with a B.A. in Art History and New York Law School with a Doctorate in Jurisprudence. She went on to receive an MFA in directing from the UCLA School of Film and Television. *The Man of Two Havanas* is her first documentary. She won IFP New York's Fledging Fund Award for a Work-in-Progress for her film that premiered at The Tribeca Film Festival to a standing ovation in 2007. In 2007 she won the 1st Coral Award at The Festival de Nuevo Cine Latino Americano in Cuba and was a Finalist for The Social Justice Award at The Santa Barbara International Film Festival.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 16th:

The Desert Within [Desierto adentro] by Rodrigo Plá (Mexico, 2008 - 112 Min) .

Well-paced prelude is set during the Cristero war (in 1928), when whole towns suspected of supporting rebels were wiped out by government troops. Even priests and their churches aren't safe, as Elias (Mario Zaragoza) discovers when his baby Aureliano is about to be born. To not have a baptism is out of the question, yet to go to the priest for one is sure to attract the eye of the military... Forced to flee with his immediate family, Elias has a vision of God... and is convinced his children will die prematurely for his sin of bringing death to the town. With his brood and sickly baby Aureliano tucked inside a glass case for protection (a vivid sight), Elias treks to the desert... Central section set in

1934 establishes a bizarre yet thoroughly realized world, in which the family has begun building a church.

Rodrigo Plá (Uruguayan born) is a Mexican director, he has written and directed five short films, including *Novia mía* which received the award as Best Short Film at the Biarritz Festival and the Guadalajara Film Festival and *Ojo en la nuca*, which, among other awards, received the student Oscar for Best Foreign Short and the Ariel for Best Fictional Short. He has also written and directed two feature films, *La Zona* and *Desierto Adentro*. The first received several international recognitions, including: the Lion of the Future for the Best Debut Film at the 64th International Venice Film Festival (2007) and the International Critics Award (FIPRESCI) - Toronto International Film Festival (2007). *Desierto Adentro* won seven awards at the 2007 Guadalajara Film Festival.

FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 17th:

Personal Belongings by Alejandro Brugués (Cuba, 2006 - 95 min).

Ernesto has been trying to leave the country for as long as he can remember. His only activity is going from embassy to embassy, trying to get a visa. He lives in his car, and all his belongings fit in a small bag. Ana's family left Cuba on a raft. She decided to stay behind, alone in her huge and empty house. She's determined to show them they made the wrong choice. From the moment they meet, Ana and Ernesto fall hopelessly in love to the point where they can't live without each other, even though they both know they have chosen completely different life paths.

Alejandro Brugués was born in Buenos Aires in 1976. He graduated from the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión de San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba. Brugués is one of the founders of Producciones la Quinta Avenida, an independent Cuban film production company. As a screenwriter, he has worked on the films *Tres Veces Dos* and *Frutas de Café*. *Personal Belongings* has screened in a number of international film festivals, including Chicago and Malaga. The film won the third prize for Best First Film at the 2008 Havana Film Festival.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 18th:

The Maid [La nana] by Sebastián Silva (Chile, 2009 - 95 Min).

After working for the Valdes family for 23 years, Raquel has become almost a member of the clan, with a rather large emphasis on the "almost." Even as she cooks and cleans, and is privy to the innermost secrets of the family--whether it's the price of a sweater or a teenage son's vigorous new interest in masturbation--Raquel is never truly a part of things. Her loneliness follows her like a stain. Into the austerity and sepulchral chill of her life, comes a blast of goofy *joie de vivre* in the form of a new maid named Lucy, whose force of personality and habit of topless sunbathing makes her almost impossible

to resist. Raquel's gradual return to life is akin to the first signs of spring, when even the first small hints of new green life are cause for celebration.

Sebastián Silva is a multifaceted artist whose work includes painting, illustration, and popular music. His paintings have been exhibited in Santiago and New York, and Sonic 360 picked one of his three bands, Los Monos, for distribution in the United States and the United Kingdom. His first film, *La Vida Me Mata*, won numerous awards in Chile and earned him the attention of critics and film festivals. *La Nana* is his second film and won the World Cinema Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival in 2009.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 19th:

Lion's Den [Leonera] by Pablo Trapero (Argentina, 2008 – 113 min.).

In a gripping opening sequence, a pregnant young woman, Julia, wakes in her apartment beside the bloodied bodies of two men, Ramiro and Nahuel. Ramiro is still alive, Nahuel is dead, and Julia herself is pretty beaten. We deduce that both have been her lovers, and that a crime of passion has occurred. The night's events are unclear, and both Ramiro and Julia are arrested. When Julia is eventually convicted, she faces the prospect of raising her son in jail, with the knowledge that when he is four he will be taken away from her.

Pablo Trapero was born in 1972 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Trapero studied architecture and film at the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires. His dazzling career began in black-and-white with the film *Mundo Grúa*, one of the most significant films of the Argentine New Wave. *Leonera* was selected for the main competition at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008. Since then, the film has been selected for a number of festivals and has won several awards, including best Latin American Film at the Mexican Academy Awards and the Jury Prize at the Havana Film Festival in Cuba.