

## Film Synopsis – 3rd Latin American and Spanish Film Week – 2012

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 18<sup>th</sup>:

*O Palhaço* [The Clown] by Selton Mello (Brasil, 2011 – 88 mins.)

In this beautifully shot, lighthearted and nostalgic tale, Valdemar and Benjamin are the fabulous father/son clown duo of Puro Sangue (Thoroughbred) and Pangaré (Mangy Horse). They make their living travelling the Brazilian countryside with the Circo Esperança (Hope Circus). They have no fixed address. Benjamin begins to grow tired of the road and worries he is no longer funny. With only his birth certificate in hand, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery to claim a life he has for so long only dreamed of knowing.

Selton Mello was born in Passos, Brazil in 1972. *O Palhaço*, his second feature film, became a box office hit in Brazil for which he won the São Paulo Association of Art Critics Award for Best Director.

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 19<sup>th</sup>:

*Gatos viejos* [Old Cats] by Sebastián Silva and Pedro Peirano (Chile, 2010 – 88 mins.)

Isadora and Enrique live a comfortable life. They have a modest yet elegant apartment in Santiago's old downtown district - complete with a lovely terrace and mountain views. Well into their 80's, they both maintain their independence and live happily with their books, their eclectic art and with their beloved two ample cats. But one day, Isadora's passionate "wild child" daughter Rosario and her butch female lover, Hugo, come for a visit with a new scheme of how to make them all rich... *Gatos viejos* is a well-crafted drama about family relations, the generation gap and misplaced expectations.

Sebastián Silva's second feature film, *La Nana*, launched his career internationally with a Golden Globe nomination for Best Foreign Film and accolades at the Sundance and Gotham festivals. Pedro Peirano is the co-writer of Silva's first film, *La vida me mata*, and *La Nana*. *Gatos Viejos* was selected at the New York Film Festival, Sundance among many others.

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 20<sup>th</sup>:

*La maleta mexicana* [The Mexican Suitcase] by Trisha Ziff (Mexico/Spain, 2010 - 86 min.)

*The Mexican Suitcase* tells the incredible story of the recovery in 2007 of 4,500 negatives taken during the Spanish Civil War by Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and David Seymour, three of the most renowned war photographers of the twentieth century. The film follows the journey of these negatives to Mexico – the images are exiles themselves, recovered seventy years later. The Mexican Suitcase brings together the recovery of the suitcase and the story of the Spanish exile.

It also looks at how people in Spain today confront their own past, 30 years after its transition to democracy. The Mexican Suitcase addresses the power of images, the persistence of memory, and the convergence of personal and collective histories.

Trisha Ziff is a curator of contemporary photography, filmmaker and Guggenheim scholar. She directed the documentary *Chevolution* (2008) about the iconic image of Che Guevara. She is currently finishing a documentary about piracy in the arts and media. She lives and works in Mexico City.

#### FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 21<sup>th</sup>

*Operación Diablo* [The Devil Operation] by Stephanie Boyd (Peru/Canada, 2010 - 69 min.)

Father Marco Arana is being followed. A private investigative firm is photographing and videotaping his every move. This humble priest has spent two decades defending Peruvian mountain farmers from a US -owned gold mine, earning him the nickname “El Diablo”, the Devil. When Father Marco’s allies are harrassed and tortured, he and his supporters take action and develop a counterespionage plan. They obtain graphic footage, photos and reports taken by the spies worthy of a Hollywood spy flick. This real-life thriller exposes the new wave of corporate terrorism faced by Latin America’s human rights defenders.

Stephanie Boyd was born in Canada and has spent the past 14 years living and working in Peru as a filmmaker and journalist. The Devil Operation has been selected at the most prestigious documentary film festivals in the world, including IDFA in Amsterdam and Hot Docs in Toronto.

#### SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 22<sup>th</sup>:

*Juan de los muertos* (2009) [Juan of The Dead] by Alejandro Brugués (Cuba, 2011 – 100 min.)

Juan is 40 years old, and has spent his life in Havana doing absolutely nothing. It’s his way of life, and he’s prepared to defend it at any cost, along with his pal Lázaro, as lazy as Juan but twice as dumb. Suddenly strange things happen; people are turning violent attacking one another. Official media refer to the attacks as isolated incidents provoked by Cuban dissidents paid by the US government, but the attackers are not normal human beings... Juan decides to take matters into his own hands, but little by little he and his friends realize that getting rid of the invaders is quite a difficult task. Half zombie movie, half political satire, *Juan de los muertos* is a dark comedy brimming with action and reflecting with poignant humour on Cuban society today.

Alejandro Brugués was born in Buenos Aires in 1976. He graduated from the International Film and Television School of San Antonio de los Baños (Cuba). “Personal Belongings”, his first feature as director, was selected for the 1<sup>st</sup> Latin American Film Week in Victoria in 2010.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 23<sup>th</sup>:

*Un Cuento Chino* [A Chinese Tale] by Sebastián Borensztein (Argentina, 2011- 93 min)

For over 20 years, introverted hardware store owner Roberto (Ricardo Darín of the Oscar-winning *The Secret in Their Eyes*) has lived as a recluse in a Buenos Aires suburb. Roberto's orderly yet lonely existence is disrupted when Jun, a young man from China stumbles into his path. Jun has just landed in Buenos Aires in search of his uncle, his only living relative, but does not speak a word of Spanish. Roberto suddenly finds himself the custodian of this stranger as he is unwillingly caught up in Jun's predicament. In this funny and heartwarming tale, destiny's intersections are many and they may even divulge the film's curious opening sequence of a cow falling from the sky.

*Un cuento chino*, Sebastián Borensztein's third feature, won the Marc'Aurelio Jury Award for Best Film at the Rome Film Festival, the Spanish Goya Award for Best Iberoamerican Film, and the Argentine Academy Award for Best Film and Best Actor. It was also seen by close to a million cinema-goers in Argentina, making it the most successful Argentine film of 2011.