



FOCUS ON CUBAN CINEMA



FALLEN GODS / Cuba / 2008 / Dir: Ernesto Daranas

In contrast to the political and formal correctness of the Cuban cinema industry, the emergence of fresh talent working independently or supported by institutions such as the Higher Institute of Arts (ISA) or the International School of Cinema and TV (EICTV) continues to offer strong signs of revitalisation. In terms of film language, ISA productions veer towards the style of music videos, while those at the EICTV are more grounded in art house or experimental cinema.

Mayckell Pedrero's **Revolution**, a portrait of the quasi-underground rap group, Los Aldeanos (The Villagers), received the top prize at an annual contest for young talent. Banned from exhibition, the film has been widely distributed via illegal DVD

copies. Although the work suffers from a faster-than-life approach to editing that some see as quintessential cinema, the anti-establishment attitude and opinions of Los Aldeanos do find a curious correlative in such a style.

The childhood and adolescence of the Cuban national hero, Jose Marti, was recreated by Fernando Perez in **Jose Marti, the Eye of the Canary** (*Jose Marti, el ojo del canario*).

Covering his formative years, the film was a blend of conventional hagiography and inventive mise-en-scene. Raul Perez Ureta's stunning cinematography, a winner of the National Prize for Cinema, makes the most of the country's stunning light.

Memories of Overdevelopment (*Memories del desarrollo*), a US\$50,000 film made over five years in the US and Cuba by guerrilla filmmaker Miguel Coyula, is a unique companion to Tomas

Gutierrez Alea's *Memories of Underdevelopment*, a classic of Cuban cinema. Sergio, an ideological relative of Alea's main character 40 years later, is now an exile in the United States, weighed down by memories and remorse for past actions. A product of the digital generation, the film ranks as one of the best this country has produced.

Lisanka, a new comedy by Daniel Diaz Torres, tells the story of a young peasant woman, employed as a tractor driver near a military base during the middle of the Missile Crisis of October, 1962, who is courted by three possessive men. Some interpreted the main character as a representation of Cuba, as she refuses to be objectified by her suitors, one of whom is a Russian soldier.

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PANORAMA OF MEXICAN CINEMA

As six multinational enterprises control film distribution in Mexico, they are also able to adjust the release of local screenings to serve their own



NORTEDO
Mexico / 2009
Dir: Rigoberto Perezcano

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Barbaro Joel Ortiz's **20 Years** (*20 anos*) is a landmark of Cuban animation. Based on a popular song, this short feature uses stop-motion technique to chart the rise and fall of a relationship. Influenced by the great Czech animator Jan Svankmajer, Ortiz worked for three years to achieve a work whose tender memories emerge painfully amidst a couple's daily routine.

Orisel Castro's **The Belly of the Whale** and **Music Box** are two good examples of how documentary filmmakers trained at the EICTV have an eye for depicting reality with subtlety. *The Belly of the Whale*, filmed in reverse, sees gestation as a heroic process made of efforts, fears, uncertainties, hopes and expectations; *Music Box* highlights the unintentional humour of registry-office weddings. In both cases, Orisel Castro employs a fragmented narrative, fake amateur cinematography and other devices to present his worlds. Another interesting documentary, albeit less ambitious, was Jessica Rodriguez and Zoe Miranda's **The World of Raul**

interests, with American blockbusters allowed the most advantageous marketing conditions. Needless to say, this situation, aggravated by the legal framework created by the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), which favours the US economy with preferential trade tariffs and taxes, has reduced the possibility for a true consolidation of a local film industry. In 2010, some 70 films were produced in Mexico, but only 45 have so far been screened and most of them are big-budget films with predictably conventional narratives. Mexican independent films are still celebrated abroad while they remain ignored at home. This is a situation that has been repeatedly reported during the past few years, but it now seriously threatens the viability of upcoming independent productions.

A sign of this is the government's decision this year to reduce the budget ascribed to the National Film Institute (IMCINE) as part of a financial move that favours a substantial increase of federal funds to support the hitherto unsuccessful fight against drug trafficking, to the detriment of both education and culture.

There is little chance that Mexican audiences will have the opportunity to appreciate the Carlos Carrera's *From Childhood* work of young filmmakers such as Nicolas Pereda, who, at the age of 28, has

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(*El mundo de Reul*) which deals with an eccentric optometrist who talks about his tastes, daily life and how he became a peeping Tom.

If the young filmmakers remain immune to the Buena Vista Social Club syndrome and try to remain faithful to their visions instead of becoming prisoners of banality, Cuban cinema will remain lively, producing films that will be worth seeing.

— Jorge Yglesias



SCENT OF AN OAK / Cuba / 2003 / Dir: Rigoberto Lopez

produced an impressive and challenging body of work. His two latest films, **Perpetuum mobile** and **Summer of Goliath** (*Verano de Gollat*), employ elaborate metaphors in their exploration of the aimlessness and violent behaviour of young people caught in the grip of chronic unemployment and the loss of faith in both their own future and in social and political progress.

Australian-born Michael Rowe's **Leap Year** (*Ano bisiesto*) focuses on the desolate erotic experience of an indigenous woman betrayed by a man, but also undermined by her own expectations regarding love and companionship. It is a fascinating study of urban solitude and the exploration of limits in a relationship that unexpectedly combines violence and sexual gratification.

Two other filmmakers, Carlos Carrera and Jorge Michel Grau, deal with domestic violence in **From Childhood** (*De la infancia*) and **We Are What We Are** (*Somos lo que hay*). Carrera describes the experience of a young boy freeing himself through fantasy from the moral misery of his family life, while Grau offers an

horrific tale of cannibalism to portray the unrelenting decay of a dysfunctional family. Social violence reaches its peak in Luis Estrada's **Hell** (*El infierno*). As in his previous film, *Heroes Law*, the director employs political satire and farcical humour to describe the current situation of over-arching corruption in Mexico. Politicians, members of the army and the police, clergymen and businessmen alike participate in a masquerade in which drug trafficking is supposedly battled against, while everybody profits from its financial success. It is a cynical look at the flaws of the Mexican political system, rendered in a tone of self-indulgent Grand Guignol that is not always rewarding.

Other films worked on a more personal level, as they dealt with the subjects of physical illness, existential uneasiness and the solitude of Mexican immigrants in America. Maria Novaro's **The Good Herbs** (*Las buenas hierbas*) explores euthanasia as the moral choice of a young woman witnessing the total decay of her mother through the ravages of Alzheimers. Ruben Imaz' **Cephalopod** (*Cefalopodo*) focuses on the long process of mourning experienced by a young painter following the death of his girlfriend and his search for a giant squid in the waters of Northern Mexico. Another interesting film, **Nomads** (*Nomadas*), shot in New York, describes the experience of a group of illegal Mexican workers as



EL ESTUDINTE / Mexico / 2009 / Dir. Roberto Girault

they try to overcome cultural alienation and moral distress through friendship and mutual understanding. Of these films only *Hell* has enjoyed some commercial success, while others still await a release that will offer them some chance of success.

A similar situation affects documentary film, which has a thriving culture, but few films are ever screened on a commercial basis. The result is generally a few small screenings to art-house audiences, where they enjoy a brief, but welcome, life.

— Carlos Bonfil

IFNC 2011 □ **PROGRAMME** □ VENUE : METRO CINEMA

	Morning 10.00 a.m.	Matinee 2.00 p.m.	Evening 6.00 p.m.
TUESDAY November 15, 2011	HASEN Egypt <i>Interval</i> DIAMONDS OF THE NIGHT Czech Dir. Jan Nemeč	HINDEMIT Bulgaria Dir: Andrey Slabakoff <i>Interval</i> TEHRAN TEHRAN Iran Dir. Dariush Mehrjui/Mehdi Karampour	BIBLIOTHEQUE PASCAL Hungary Dir: Szabolcs Hajdu <i>Interval</i> HAIR Turkey Dir. Tayfun Pirselimiglu
WEDNESDAY November 16, 2011	MADE IN POLAND Poland / 2010 Dir. Przemysław Wojcieszek <i>Interval</i> THE THREE WAY WEDDING France / 2010 Dir. Jacques Doillon	WIN / WIN Netherlands Dir: Jaap van Heusden <i>Interval</i> BLACK OCEAN Belgium / 2010 Dir: Marion Hansel	MAYA BAZAR India Dir: Joydeep Ghosh <i>Interval</i> TRANQUILITY Hungary Dir. Robert Alföldi



PLEASE NOTE

- Festival Bulletins are being brought out daily during the festival containing details of the programme and other information and write-up on world cinema. Bulletin priced at Rs. 2.00 is being sold at the venue daily from 12.00 noon to 8.00 p.m.
- A Book of Synopses priced at Rs. 30.00 is available at reduced rate of Rs.20/- for the members only at the venue.
- Three shows are being held daily at 10.00 a.m., 2.00 p.m. & 6.00 p.m. In each show two feature films are being shown.
- Entry in all shows by Membership/Invitation Card which is not transferable.
- Please present your Card at the gate and take your seat 5 minutes before the show starts. The entrance will be closed after 10 minutes.
- Admission to all the shows is open till the hall is full. Seating is on 'first-come-first-served' basis. No seat can be kept reserved for others by keeping bags, handkerchiefs etc.
- The hall has to be vacated after 10.00 a.m. and 2.00 p.m. show.
- Several rows in the Balcony are kept reserved for Dignitaries, Consular Corps and Special Guests.
- Programme is always subject to change or cancellation without prior notice.
- Carrying Mobile and any other electronic items inside the hall is strictly prohibited.
- Minors are not allowed.