



Ibero-americanism hits the Vancity screen

FEBRUARY 18, 2013 BY SARA WHITTAKER LEAVE A COMMENT

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Scene from the film Wilaya, playing at the New Spanish Cinema Week. Photo courtesy of Vancouver International Film Festival

Suspense, sensuality, social commentary and Spanish rhythms await moviegoers at the New Spanish Cinema Week at Vancity Theatre from Feb. 22–28.

"Our goal is to continue to, via the films, share the Iberoamerican culture, and help to enrich the cultural diversity of Vancouver and Canada, with the support of our sponsors...we try to have an inclusive and diverse selection appealing to all tastes and interests, from both new and established filmmakers from Iberoamerica," says Victor Martínez Ajá, director of Iberoamerican Images, the Vancouver-based organization responsible for the selection of the films and for coordinating the event here.

The festival will open with a gala reception on Friday, Feb. 22, which will include words from sponsors like PRAGDA, a Latin American and Spanish film distributing company based in Brooklyn, New York, the Embassy of Spain in Ottawa, the Vancouver International Film Theatre and the *Sociedad Española de la Colombia Británica* (Spanish Society of British Colombia).

"It is a pleasure to be able to support the presentation of the work of Spanish filmmakers and to share our roots with anyone interested in our culture here [in Canada]," says Mercedes Sánchez García, board member of the Sociedad Española.

Live entertainment for the opening gala will be provided by Flamenco Rosario, a Vancouver-based dance company.

"Our dance group, which includes members from several countries including Japan and Perú, will perform traditional flamenco pieces written by Victor Kolstee, the company's musical director, who will also accompany them on guitar," says Rosario Ancer, founder and artistic director.

The festival, which is celebrating its fifth anniversary, brought seven films to Vancouver last year. It will also visit Calgary and Edmonton and has plans to soon include films in Portuguese as well as Spanish, says Martínez Ajá.



Victor Martínez Ajá, director. Photo courtesy of Victor Martínez Ajá

Among the five productions to be shown during the week-long affair are two artistic films. In *Madrid 1987* (Spain, 2011), director David Trueba moves characters Angela and Miguel from a business meeting in a café in Spain to an apartment where a turn of events locks them in a bathroom, naked, with no possibility of escape for 24 hours, to debate their political and social stances on a Spain in transition.

The other art film is *The Double Steps* (Spain & Switzerland, 2011) by Isaki Lacuesta, which won the Golden Shell award for best film at the San Sebastián International Film Festival last autumn. Combining reality and fantasy, it takes viewers through the Mali desert in search of a painting by real-life French writer/painter François Auguieras who, according to legend, painted all the walls of a military bunker in the desert with his art and then sealed its entrance with a boulder. The painter, who died in 1971, is reincarnated as a local villager and looks for his painting, now under meters of desert sand. Spanish painter Miguel Barceló has a cameo appearance where he is shown working on his artistic creations.

Other festival entries include *Wilaya* (Spain, 2012), by Pedro Pérez Rosado, a social commentary exploring life in a refugee camp in Africa, as well as migration and cultural expectations. The protagonist, Fatimetu, finds herself back in the Algerian camp where she was born and where she is now expected to stay to care for her siblings, but she longs to return to her foster family in Spain. *Sleep Tight* (Spain, 2011), will bring in the suspense when a Barcelona apartment doorman, César, picks Clara, one of the tenants, as the target of his macabre imagination. Directed by the co-writer and director of the two REC thriller films, Jaume Balagueró, this film is scheduled for two showings on Feb. 23 and Feb. 28. *Blancanieves* (Spain, 2012) by Pablo Berger will be shown as part of the opening night gala. A retelling of the fairy tale *Snow White*, but one in which the main character discovers her bullfighting abilities, it is a silent movie with traditional black and white presentation, delivered with a score of Spanish rhythms and dance.

With a diverse set of films from some of the most notable directors of contemporary Spanish cinema, the festival promises to offer something for everyone to enjoy.

"A modest cultural contribution with each event we organize is of great satisfaction to me," says Danais Yera Guerra, general coordinator for Iberoamerican Images.

"Vancouver is a wonderful city with an audience of all different tastes. I believe they will enjoy the varied themes presented from each director's point of view."

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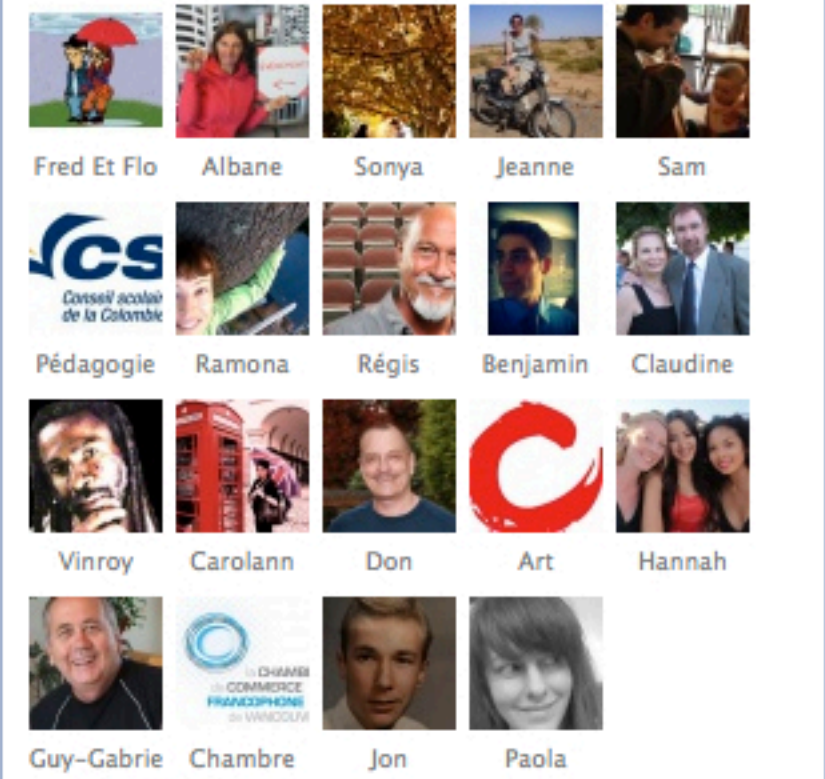
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