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How Miami's Film Festival Gets Latin American Movies To The Global Screen

By [TIM PADGETT \(/PEOPLE/TIM-PADGETT\)](/PEOPLE/TIM-PADGETT) • 19 HOURS AGO

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(http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/p/wlrn/files/styles/x_large/public/201603/all_about_the_feathers.jpg)

Allan Cascante as the security guard Chalo in "All About the Feathers"

POR LAS PLUMAS



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Costa Rica isn't widely known for its movies. But three years ago, a deadpan comedy called "Por las Plumas," or "All About the Feathers," got shown at prestigious film festivals like Toronto and

Cannes.

And it reached those cinematic heights thanks in no small part to a longstanding but lesser known program created by the Miami International Film Festival (<http://2016.miamifilmfestival.com/>), which opened over the weekend at Miami Dade College.

That project, begun 13 years ago, is called Encuentros, or Encounters. It finds promising new Latin American and Spanish-language films that are still in production and helps them get finished. And that can mean *mucho* to filmmakers in a region where global hits like “Embrace of the Serpent,” the Colombian movie that was one of this year’s foreign Oscar nominees, are still a rarity.

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There is a lot less institutional support for moviemaking in Latin America - no Hollywood-style studio system - which makes backing from places like Miami (the so-called capital of Latin America) all the more important.

“What happens a lot in Latin America is that funds go just so far, or sometimes currencies devalue. So many things happen that people can’t finish movies,” says Andres Castillo, a Miami film festival senior programmer who travels the hemisphere seeking out films for the Encuentros competition.

“So we decided that post-production help is the best solution. A movie is like a big puzzle – it gets put together in the editing room and you need sound, color correction, sub-titling. You really can’t cut corners there, because that’s where the movie will look great and feel great. I think in many ways it’s the most important part.”

Each year Encuentros selects five films for consideration by a panel of expert jurors. The winner wins a \$10,000 Knight Foundation prize.

This year’s films are all South American:

- From Argentina: “*El Pampero*,” directed by Mathias Luchessi, about a terminally ill man and a runaway woman.

- Also from Argentina: “*Nadie Nos Mira*” (“Nobody’s Watching”), by Julia Solomonoff, about an Argentine actor struggling in New York.

In Latin America funds go just so far, or sometimes currencies devalue - so many things happen that people can't finish movies. -Andres Castillo

- From Brazil: “*O Filme da Minha Vida*” (“A Movie Life”), by Selton Mello, about a young man discovering the truth about his father.
- From Chile: “*Prueba de Conducta*” (Attitude Test), by Augusto Matte and Fabrizio Copano, about teenagers stealing college entrance exams.
- From Uruguay: “*El Candidato*” (“The Candidate”), by Daniel Hendler, about a man weighing his options in politics.

Castillo’s job can be especially difficult because “Latin American film” can mean many different things, given how culturally balkanized the region is.

DRY HUMOR

“If you watch a comedy from Argentina, it’s not going to be the same as a comedy from Chile, right next door,” he says. “I think it’s easier for an American to understand Argentine humor than Chilean humor, which is a lot drier. But ‘Attitude Test’ is still a really good comedy.”

That was certainly the case with “All About the Feathers,” the debut film of Costa Rican director Neto Villalobos and the 2013 Encuentros winner. Miami New Times said the movie – about a security guard, his rooster and the underworld of cockfighting – “recalls early Wes Anderson without being too cute about it.”

ALL ABOUT THE FEATHERS Trailer | Festival 2013



“I’d never seen a comedy from Costa Rica like that before,” says Castillo. “The characters are really not part of your world, but once you go into that world, the movie really works, very clever and very well written. It was celebrated everywhere in the world. It’s a great little movie.”

Castillo, who is from Guayaquil, Ecuador, remembers the first time he ever saw a movie that, for him, was decidedly *Latinoamericano*.

“*Ratas Ratonos Rateros*,’ a film by Sebastián Cordero that came out in 1999 when I was 19,” he says. “It was about two delinquents, and it revolutionized everything for me. He brought this style of delinquency, but it was also a smart movie with an incredible soundtrack that anybody from Ecuador of my age still loves. It’s part of our lives.

“It was amazing that it was *our* movie, from Ecuador. It was one of my proudest moments because it was like a *finally* – from my country a really good movie.”

This year the Miami International Film Festival is presenting past Encuentros films. They include one of last year’s finalists, “*Te Prometo Anarquía*” (I Promise You Anarchy”), by Julio Hernández Córdón, a gritty urban drama from Mexico about two gay skateboarders who get mixed up in mafia affairs.

“Hernández Córdón is one of those directors that’s part of the post-punk movements,” says Castillo. “In Latin America it’s not very usual to see those kinds of features being made or those kinds of characters in movies.”

It’s a reminder that many Latin American filmmakers often don’t make it to post-punk without a hand in post-production.

TE PROMETO ANARQUÍA - Trailer with English Subtitles



The Encuentros winner will be announced on Friday. The Miami International Film Festival runs through March 13.

Tim Padgett covers Latin America for WLRN. You can find more of his coverage here (<http://wlrn.org/people/tim-padgett>).

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