

Cuban Cinema

Cuba is widely recognized as having one of the best film industries in Latin America that has consistently produced interesting and challenging work of critical acclaim within the international film circuit.

The Cuban Film Institute has been integral to this development with many renowned filmmakers taking exile in Cuba during periods of dictatorships in other parts of Latin America.

Cubans can go to the cinema for a peso (about 5 cents), it is a vital part of their culture and as a result Cubans are some of the sharpest critics of cinema, dissecting films long after the credits roll. It is not surprising that Cuba hosts two of the most important festivals for the Latin world, the Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano in Havana, along with the Festival de Cine Pobre in Gibara, one of the most authentic and charming events on the independent film circuit.

There is also an international cinema university, the Escuela Internacional de Cine, Televisión y Video de San Antonio de los Baños (International School of Cinema, Television and Video of San Antonio de los Baños) located in San Antonio de los Baños near Havana, in a terrain donated by the Cuban government and supported by the Fundación del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano, Gabriel García Márquez and the Father of the New Latin American Cinema, Fernando Birri. Hundreds of young students from all over Latin America have studied direction, script, photography and edition.

Australia Cuba Links

Australia has already made inroads into the Cuban consciousness through the very first Festival of Australian films taking place later this year in one of Havana's most prestigious cinemas, the Riveria. The week-long festival will include Aussie classics such as Two Hands, Rabbit Proof Fence and The Dish.

Film Program

TOM MANN THEATRE
136 Chalmers St, Surry Hills

FRIDAY 24 JULY

7:00pm Opening Night Cuban Fiesta

The Tom Mann Theatre hosts the opening night of the inaugural Cuban Film Festival

**with the Australian premiere of the Cuban favourite of 2008, *Broken Gods*.
Join us before the film for a special Cuban dance spectacular and a little Cuban rum
to warm the winter whistles thanks to Havana Club.**

Broken Gods (Los Dioses Rotos)

Dir: Ernesto Daranas / Cuba-México / 2008 / 96' / ICAIC

Feature Drama Spanish w/ English subtitles

Ernesto Daranas's award-winning debut feature brings to the light the legend of *Alberto Yarini*, the infamous pimp from an aristocratic family, shot dead by his French rivals in Havana at the start of the 20th century.

Broken Gods delves inside the modern day world of prostitution in Havana, intertwining the series of events a century before that led to the assassination of the city's most infamous underworld figure.

This passionate and beautiful film is a Cuban version of the Greek tragedy as recreated in *Carlos Felipe's* play *Réquiem por Yarini*. *Almodovar*-esque and voluptuous use of photography and art direction provides the blood, character and heartbeat to the story.

Accessible, conceptually rich, complex and controversial; *Broken Gods* is a befitting way for the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Best Film – Festival de Cine Pobre, Gibara

Audience Award 30th Festival of New Latin American Cinema Havana, Cuba

SATURDAY 25 JULY

4.00pm Memories of Underdevelopment (Memorias del Subdesarrollo)

Dir. Tomás Gutiérrez Alea / 1968 / 95 min / ICAIC

Feature Drama Spanish w/ English subtitles

A middle-class intellectual, who has stayed in Cuba after the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, faces a new world he does not seem to grasp. Solid dramaturgy and outstanding acting, it is the most acclaimed Cuban film by national and international critics and was selected among the best 1000 films of all times by the International Federation of Film-Clubs.

Screening with Short Film from Festival of New Directors, ICAIC, Havana Cuba

6:00pm El Benny

Dir. Jorge Luis Sánchez / 2006 / 123min / ICAIC

Feature Drama Spanish w/ English subtitles

Based on the life of famous Cuban musician, Benny Moré, *El Benny* tells the tale of Cuba in the early 1950s when Moré hit the big-time. *El Benny* shows a man with a prodigious voice, a composer of melodious pieces, with no musical knowledge at all who was moved by inspiration, instinct and with a great internal rebelliousness. Few have reached this level of fame in an island filled with talented musicians, composers and singers.

The film's soundtrack is crafted by two of Cuba's most important composers, *Eduardo Ramos*, and *Juan Formell* (director of Los Van Van orchestra) along with *Juan Manuel Ceruto* & pianist *Chucho Valdés*. Topping it off is a fabulous interpretation of El Benny's pieces by hip-hop group *Orishas*.

8:30pm The Silly Age (La Edad de la Peseta)

Dir. Pavel Giroud / 2006 / 90 minutes / ICAIC
Feature Drama Spanish w/ English subtitles

This colorful and bittersweet coming of age drama is set in Havana, 1958, the year that culminates in the triumph of the Revolution. The "silly age" in Cuba refers to a boy's emergence from the narcissistic cocoon of childhood into adolescence. Ten-year-old Samuel has just arrived in town with his recently divorced mother, Alicia. They make a striking pair: from their demeanor it seems she is the child and he the adult. They take up residence in the house of his eccentric grandmother Violeta, and Samuel is introduced to a new, mysterious world. With a sensitive directorial touch, atmospheric cinematography and memorable performances, *The Silly Age* renders provocatively the transformations of coming of age, both for a child and a country.

Nominated Goya Award 2008 - Best Spanish Language Foreign Film
Screening with Short Film from Festival of New Directors, ICAIC, Havana Cuba

SUNDAY 26 JULY (Cuban Independence Day)

2:30pm The Documentaries of Santiago Alvarez

Screening with 'The Pacific School of Medicine' by Dr Tim Anderson

"Give me two photographs, a moviola and some music and I'll make you a film," Santiago Alvarez once said. He was true to his word. Working quickly and with inadequate equipment, he made a series of films in the 60s and early 70s that have yet to be beaten either as propaganda, as newsreels or as pieces of brilliantly improvised cinema. In his first 40 years, Cuban filmmaker Santiago Alvarez did not make a single film. In his last 40 years, he made more than 600.

"I am a product of 'accelerated underdevelopment,'" Alvarez would say. "The Revolution made me a film director. I learnt the job fondly handling millions of feet of film."

LBJ

Dir. Santiago Alvarez / 1968 / Experimental / 18 min

LBJ is a bitter satire about President Johnson. Divided in three sections, each one corresponds to Johnson's initials. L is for Martin Luther King, B is for Bobby Kennedy and J is for Jack Kennedy. Alvarez implicates Johnson in all three assassinations, portraying his presidency as the culmination of a history of socio-political corruption. Clips from Hollywood movies and a cartoon of Johnson as the all-American cowboy reinforce this view

Now

Dir. Santiago Alvarez / 1968 / Experimental / 6 min

Using mostly photographs clipped from American magazines such as *Life*, *Álvarez* creates a dynamic montage of images in juxtaposition with the lyrics of "Now" sung by *Lena Horne*. The resulting film, *Now*, is a remarkable precursor to the music video format, 20 years ahead of its time, presenting a vivid critique of racism in the U.S. in the 60's and as a call for action.

Hanoi, Tuesday 13

Dir. Santiago Alvarez / 1968 / Experimental / 25 min.

The title of *Hanoi, Tuesday 13* refers to December 13, 1966 shortly after Santiago *Álvarez* arrived in Hanoi, when American aircraft attacked at 2:50 in the afternoon while he was out filming. The film is constructed like *Now* on the basis of juxtaposition, but is closer in form to the more traditional documentary. The opening, though, directly implicates LBJ and his family in the war with Vietnam, and in its satirical collage provides the blueprint for LBJ. *Hanoi, Tuesday 13* begins on colour footage of Vietnamese artworks, while a voice over counterpoints their serene beauty with a tale of the struggle of the Anamite people of South East Asia to assert their independence. The verbal text is taken from a 19th century children's book, *La Edad de Oro* (The Golden Age) written by the Cuban national hero, Jose Marti. The section on LBJ, follows the main title, *Hanoi, Tuesday 13*, which is animated to rush out at the viewer. Shots of youthful demonstrations representing dissent within America, heighten the mode of counterpoint and confrontation.

Ciclón

Dir. Santiago Alvarez / 1963 / 22 min

CICLÓN is coverage of hurricane Flora's sweeping the Cuban provinces of Camagüey and Oriente in October 1963: the damage, the evacuation of the villages, and the aid to victims.

The Pacific School of Medicine

Dir. Dr Tim Anderson / 2009 / Australia / 20 min

This short documentary shows Cuba doctor training program through the voices of students from Timor Leste and the Pacific, in colleges across Cuba. In some ways a sequel to 'The Doctors of Tomorrow' (2008, 39 min), which portrayed the Timor Leste-Cuba health cooperation, this one shows some of the 700 Timorese students joined by another hundred students from Kiribati, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, Nauru and Tuvalu. They tell of their experiences studying medicine in Cuba.

The screening of the Pacific School of Medicine will be followed by a Q+A session with the Director, Dr. Tim Anderson

4.30pm Barrio Cuba

Dir. Humberto Solas, 2005, 105 mins

The outstanding “Barrio Cuba”, the second last feature from the great Humberto Solas (Miel para Ochun, Un hombre de Exito). Comic and tragic by turns, it navigates the complicated twists in the relationships of three sets of characters, all living from day to day in a poor area of Havana. Never ignoring the political, this film is, nonetheless, a deeply moving account of the human longing for love and meaning, in the midst of hardship. The power of dreams, set against the realities of life, is the theme for this humane examination of disappointment and redemption. Delicate scripting and wonderfully observed performances make for a luminous film which explores the darkest depths of experience, as well as its most sublime heights.

Screening with Short Film from Festival of New Directors, ICAIC, Havana Cuba

6.30pm Closing Night Film - Strawberry and Chocolate (Fresa y Chocolate)

Dirs: Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío, 1993, 110 min

The first Cuban film to be nominated for an Oscar, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío's Strawberries and Chocolate is a warm, witty story of friendship filmed against the chaos and colour of Havana, Cuba in 1979. David is a University student who meets Diego, a gay artist unhappy with the Castro regime's attitude toward the LGBT community as well as the censored conceptualization of culture. David's heterosexual classmate, Miguel, plans to use David to spy on Diego, a person who they see as aberrant and dangerous to the Communist cause.

Sundance Film Festival: Special Jury Prize: Special Mention

Berlin International Film Festival: Silver Berlin Bear—Special Jury Prize, Best Feature Film

Screening with Short Film from Festival of New Directors, ICAIC, Havana Cuba