

## South American Renaissance



When **Walter Salles' *Central Station*** (1998) won the **Golden Bear** in Berlin that same year, its success heralded much more than the return of Brazilian cinema to the world stage. This August, **BFI Southbank** looks at *Central Station* as being the vanguard for a renaissance of filmmaking across South America and a selection of the films that followed it.

A year after Salles' Brazilian breakthrough, **Pablo Trapero's *Crane World*** (1999) introduced international audiences to a New Argentine Cinema, a movement of largely film school-trained directors that included such inimitable talents as **Lucrecia Martel** and **Lisandro Alonso**. Soon an equally young – and resourceful – generation in Chile, Uruguay and Peru would begin to make its presence felt.

Their achievement was not only to get films made, in industries that offered few opportunities, but to lend their essentially local stories universal appeal. **Fernando Meirelles' *City of God*** (2002), with its vibrant account of the drug war in Rio's favelas, was both a massive hit in Brazil, and one of the most popular and successful international films of recent years. Hollywood paid tribute to **Fabián Bielinsky's** film about a counterfeiter in Argentina, ***Nine Queens*** (2000), by remaking it in 2004.

The experiences of the filmmakers involving dictatorship, institutional corruption, crippling neo-liberalism, feed directly into films such as Martel's ***The Headless Woman*** (2008) from Argentina, **Pablo Larraín's *Tony Manero*** (2008) from Chile, and **Josué Méndez's *Dioses*** (2008) from Peru, as directors tackle questions of guilt and responsibility, and personal and national identity, amid the ever-changing political and social landscapes of their countries. While some directors (Salles and Trapero among them) have tapped into the legacy of neo-realism in Latin cinema, what distinguishes the continent's current output is its diversity – the droll comedy of **Pablo Stoll** and **Juan Pablo Rebella's *Whisky*** (2004) being far removed from **Alicia Scherson's** inventive and enigmatic ***Play*** (2005), or the rigorous minimalism of Alonso's ***Liverpool*** (2008).

This season reflects some notable traits: South America's imaginative documentary-making (***The Blondes*** (2003), ***Bus 174*** (2004)) and penchant for road movies; its enviable number of women directors; and, not least, the spirit of collaboration that has developed within and across countries. No film here is more emblematic of both shared experience and shared inspiration than ***The Motorcycle Diaries*** (2004). It's somehow apt that its director should be Walter Salles.

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### **Central Station** *Central do Brasil*

Fernanda Montenegro was Oscar nominated for her performance as the cynical, cheating Dora, a retired teacher who reluctantly helps a homeless boy search for the father he's never known – and rediscovers her humanity in the process. Salles' influential third feature is a deeply affecting road movie through which, as his odd couple travel from Rio into the Brazilian hinterland, the director explores a country shaken by years of adversity.

Brazil 1998 Dir Walter Salles With Fernanda Montenegro, Vinicius de Oliveira 110min EST 15

**Sun 1 Aug 16:00 NFT1, Tue 3 Aug 20:40, NFT2, Sat 7 Aug 15:50 NFT3, Tue 17, Aug 14:00 NFT3** - Seniors' matinee

### **Crane World** *Mundo grúa*

The prolific Trapero's approach – the immediate shooting style, use of non-actors, real locations and stories from everyday life – has become synonymous with the revolution in Argentine filmmaking. The engaging empathy with his characters is all his own. This auspicious debut follows a middle-aged man's struggle to forge a new career as a crane operator in Buenos Aires – a far cry from his former glory as a rock star.

Argentina 1999 Dir Pablo Trapero With Luis Margani, Adriana Aizemberg 89min Video EST

**Sun 1 Aug 18:20 NFT2, Thu 5 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **Nine Queens** *Nueve Reinas*

*Nine Queens* was a rare, fabulous foray into genre by Argentina's new wave – a consummate con-movie, with a deliciously shifty Ricardo Darín as a grifter hoping to make a mint out of counterfeit stamps. Vividly filming on location in Buenos Aires, writer-director Bielinsky slyly incorporated the country's very real economic crisis into his story's sting. Hollywood paid its usual respects by remaking the film – nowhere near as well.

Argentina 2000 Dir Fabián Bielinsky With Ricardo Darín, Gastón Pauls, Leticia Brédice 115min EST

**Sun 1 Aug 20:40 NFT2, Wed 4 Aug 18:20 NFT2, Thu 5 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **City of God** *Cidade de Deus*

This sprawling, engrossing account of the rise of drug gangs in a Rio favela has the customary features of crime drama – psychotic hoods, power struggle and betrayal, violence – but also a milieu that had rarely been seen before. Meirelles and his collaborators devised a bravura narrative style, at the heart of which are mesmerising performances from real-life favela kids, a veritable choir of angels with dirty faces.

Brazil 2002 Dir Fernando Meirelles Co-dir Kátia Lund With Alexandre Rodrigues, Leandro Firmino, Phellipe Haagensen 130min EST

**Mon 2 Aug 18:15 NFT2, Sun 8 Aug 20:30 NFT1**

### **Bus 174** *Ônibus 174*

This fine documentary is concerned with an infamous bus hijacking in Rio and the subsequent stand-off between the hijacker and police, which had the nation glued to its television screens. Padilha uses the TV footage to reconstruct the long, nerve-shredding siege (with a kinetic style reminiscent of Kevin Macdonald's *One Day in September*), while exploring the social conditions that turned a homeless man into a criminal.

Brazil 2002 Dir José Padilha 120min EST 15

**Tue 3 Aug 18:15 NFT2, Sat 7 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **Minimal Stories** *Historias mínimas*

Carlos Sorín's triptych of tales brings together an elderly shop owner, a travelling salesman and a poor young mother, each on a journey through the Patagonian landscape. Performed by a largely non-professional cast, these intimate stories are interwoven with poetic warmth and a delicate humour. The result is a beautiful road movie that eschews sentimentality in favour of a gently observed contemplation of the relationship between dreams, aspirations and reality.

Argentina 2002 Dir Carlos Sorín With Javier Lombardo, Antonio Benedicti, Javiera Bravo 92min EST 15

**Fri 6 Aug 20:45 NFT2, Wed 11 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **The Magic Gloves** *Los guantes mágicos*

Alejandro, a taxi-driver-cum-chauffeur, has fallen on hard times when he meets the entrepreneurial brother of an old school friend, and a stewardess looking for a change. Suddenly his world involves porn stars and dog-walkers, anti-depressants and 'magic gloves', with unpredictable consequences. Through his quirky tale of mismatched couples and ill-fated dreams, Rejtman offers a droll, brilliantly performed satire on relationships in an era of economic freefall.

Argentina 2003. Dir Martín Rejtman With Gabriel 'Vicentico' Fernández Capello 90min EST

**Sun 8 Aug 16:00 NFT2, Wed 11 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **The Blondes** *Los rubios*

In 1977, political activists Ana Maria Caruso and Roberto Carri joined the ranks of Argentina's 'disappeared', the thousands kidnapped and murdered by dictatorship thugs. Albertina Carri was one of the three daughters left behind. With its dazzling array of narrative techniques and compelling candour, Carri's extraordinary film is not just an investigation of her parents' fate, or an indictment of the junta, but a reflection on documentary filmmaking itself.

Argentina 2003 Dir Albertina Carri With Albertina Carri, Analía Couceyro, Santiago Giralt 89min EST

**Mon 2 Aug 20:45 NFT2, Sat 7 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **Whisky**

When the owner of a sock factory, Jacobo, faces the arrival of his younger, estranged brother Herman, he enlists office manager Marta to enter into a 'temporary' marriage that will convince his sibling that he is a contented family man. A delightfully dour comedy, marked by a trio of terrific deadpan performances, *Whisky* presents an original take on family dynamics in a sleepy corner of Montevideo.

Uruguay 2004 Dir Juan Pablo Rebella & Pablo Stoll With Andrés Pazos, Mirella Pascual 99min EST 15

**Mon 9 Aug 18:20 NFT2, Tue 10 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **The Motorcycle Diaries** *Diarios de motocicleta*

Salles again turned to the road movie to chart the coming of age of Che Guevara. Adapted from the revolutionary's famed memoir, this follows Guevara and spirited pal Alberto Grenado on their journey around South America in the early 1950s, when they discovered a continent bound by injustice. With its charismatic leads open to the genuine encounters of the road, this is a charming, subtle, persuasive account of political awakening.

Brazil 2004 Dir Walter Salles With Gael García Bernal, Rodrigo de la Serna, Mia Maestro 126min EST 15

**Tue 10 Aug 20:20 NFT3, Sat 14 Aug 18:00 NFT2, Tue 31 Aug 20:30 NFT1**

### **Cinema, Aspirins and Vultures** *Cinema, aspirinas e urubus*

The 1940s. Johann, a German escaping the World War, is selling aspirin in rural Brazil – and showing movies on a portable projector to attract the punters. On his travels he encounters a local, Ranulpho, and offers him a job as his assistant. Together they bicker, laugh, share stories and slowly disclose information about their lives. Gomes' assured road movie is a handsomely shot study of an unlikely friendship in compromised times.

Brazil 2005 Dir Marcelo Gomes With Peter Ketnath, João Miguel 99min EST

**Thu 12 Aug 18:30 NFT2, Sun 15 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **Play**

Cristina, a Mapuche domestic assistant in the Chilean capital, Santiago, finds a briefcase belonging to an architect, Tristán. Fascinated by its contents, she starts to stalk its owner. Meanwhile, the loss of his case has propelled the hapless Tristán into an emotional journey of his own. Scherson's audacious debut, realised in a palette of bright, bold colours, fashions eccentric parallel tales in an odyssey through a 21st-century metropolis.

Chile 2005 Dir Alicia Scherson With Viviana Herrera, Andrés Ulloa, Aline Küppenheim. 106min EST 15

**Sun 15 Aug 16:00 NFT2, Mon 16 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **Lower City** *Cidade Baixa*

There is an edgy verisimilitude to Sérgio Machado's love-triangle drama, shot amongst the hustlers, criminals and prostitutes of Brazil's colourful port city, Salvador. The director has a refreshingly non-judgmental approach to his wayward protagonists (lustily played by three of the country's biggest young stars). And, such is his visceral rendering of his setting, one imagines being able to smell the blood, sweat and sex.

Brazil 2005 Dir Sérgio Machado With Wagner Moura, Lázaro Ramos, Alice Braga 97min EST

**Wed 18 Aug 20:45 NFT2, Sun 22 Aug 16:00 NFT2, Sun 29 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **Madeinusa**

The religiously fervent inhabitants of an Andean village have an unusual take on Easter: between Good Friday and Easter Sunday they declare that 'God is dead', leaving them to sin with impunity while he's not watching. Unhappily for local girl Madeinusa, her father intends to use this opportunity to take her virginity. Ravishingly shot on HD, Claudia Llosa's debut is a sinister meeting of imagination and anthropology.

Peru 2006 Dir Claudia Llosa With Magaly Solier, Carlos de la Torre, Ubaldo Huamán 100min EST

**Fri 20 Aug 20:40 NFT2, Mon 23 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **Paraguayan Hammock** *Hamaca Paraguaya*

Encina's debut feature – the first Paraguayan film in three decades – follows a bickering elderly couple from dawn to dusk, as they tend their smallholding in the forest and await their son's return from

war. The void left by their child is palpable, and painful. Set in the 1930s, this is nevertheless a timeless contemplation of mortality and memory, realised through painterly compositions, austere storytelling and fine, unmannered performances.

Paraguay-France-Argentina-Netherlands-Spain 2006 Dir Paz Encina With Ramón Del Río 78min EST

**Sun 8 Aug 18:30 NFT2, Mon 9 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **Dioses**

A story of the 'haves' in contemporary Peruvian society, told with compassion and insight, Josué Méndez's second film captures the hedonistic, self-destructive nihilism of two upper-class students home for the summer, in the protective bubble of their wealthy family. Part satire, part black comedy, *Dioses* uses the outsider's perspective of the siblings' future stepmother (who is from much humbler origins) to comment on the absurdities of a world of excess.

Peru 2008 Dir Josué Méndez With Sergio Gjurinovic, Maricielo Effio, Anahí de Cárdenas 91min EST

**Mon 23 Aug 20:45 NFT2, Fri 27 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **The Headless Woman *La mujer sin cabeza***

A dentist, Verónica, has a car accident on the way home from a family get-together. Has she hit a dog, or a child? What should she do? Lucrecia Martel's remarkable third feature follows the traumatised heroine as she floats through her habitual daily routines. The result is a psychological thriller that segues from the mystery of an individual crime to a compelling exploration of communal guilt.

Argentina 2008 Dir Lucrecia Martel With María Onetto, Inés Efron, Daniel Genoud 89min EST 12A

**Sat 21 Aug 20:40 NFT2, Sat 28 Aug 20:40 NFT2, Mon 30 Aug 20:40 NFT2**

### **Liverpool**

A solitary sailor takes shore leave at Ushuia, the world's most southern city, and travels home – through a frozen landscape – to visit his family. But when he arrives, things are not quite what he expected. Distinguished by Alonso's exquisite attention to palette and colour, place and landscape, sound and silence,

*Liverpool* functions both as a riveting character study and as an examination of the meaning of community.

Argentina 2008 Dir Lisandro Alonso With Juan Fernández, Giselle Irazabal 84min EST

**Tue 24 Aug 20:40 NFT2, Sat 28 Aug 17:50 NFT2**

### **Tony Manero**

Chile 2008 Dir Pablo Larraín With Alfredo Castro, Paola Lattus, Héctor Morales 97min EST

This gripping pitch-black comedy sees middle-aged loner Raúl dream of dancing his way to fame. Modelling

himself on John Travolta's character from *Saturday Night Fever*, he attempts to emulate Manero's dance moves with a motley crew of dance associates. But the predatory Raúl has secrets – and in late 1970s Chile, in the grip of Pinochet's dictatorship, secrets are too often perceived as a threat to institutional order.

**Wed 25 Aug 20:45 NFT2, Fri 27 Aug 20:40 NFT2, Sun 29 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **Gigante**

A security guard at a supermarket in Montevideo becomes obsessed with one of the store's cleaners. He begins following her after she leaves work, until policing her movements comes to take up most of his time and energy. Biniez's unusual debut explores the fine line between love and obsession, with Camandulle excelling as the bulky, gauche security guard who gradually loses control of his feelings.

Uruguay 2009 Dir Adrián Biniez With Horacio Camandulle, Federico García, Leonor Svarcas 84min EST

**Thu 26 Aug 20:40 NFT2, Sat 28 Aug 16:00 NFT2, Mon 30 Aug 18:20 NFT2**

### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

The Southbank Centre will be holding **Festival Brazil** - a major summer festival of music, visual arts, dance, literature, debates and free performances, at venues across Southbank Centre from 19 June to 5 September 2010. The festival celebrates the dynamic culture of today's Brazil and is sponsored by HSBC

*The Faber Book of New South American Cinema*, by Demetrios Matheou, is published on Thu 5 Aug by Faber and Faber

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