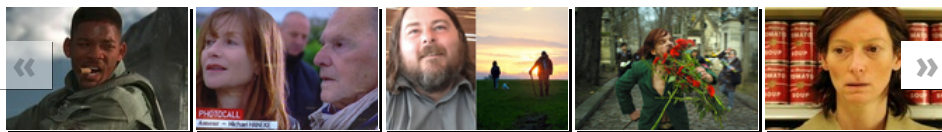


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FESTIVALS

BY **RYAN LATTANZIO** | MAI 23, 2012 9:03 AM
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"Aqui Y Alla"

In the last two days, I have seen two excellent films at Critics' Week that, if they acquire distribution, could find a good life ahead.

Restrained and contemplative, Spanish filmmaker Antonio Mendez Esparaza's debut "Aquí y Allá," is about life in a small mountain village in Guerrero, Mexico. In the vein of Ozu or even Apichatpong Weerasethakul, the film is composed of sublime little fragments of life passing by--without the magical realism. A family sits at the table eating dinner. A teenager experiences first love. Men work in the fields. Crickets chirp in the night. Guerreran denizens mill in the street, quiet and hard-working even in the face of minor personal tragedies. A man (Pedro de Los Santos Juarez) returns home from the US to his pregnant wife and two daughters.

This is the best film yet to screen at Cannes' Critics' Week, confidently made without a single wasted scene. The quotidian reality of Guerrero village life is realized with lyricism and lack of sentimentality. Columbia University Cinema grad Mendez Esparaza's cast of non-actors, lead by Juarez and Teresa Ramirez Aguirre, give reticent performances. In a time when cinematic images are often frantic and hysterical, "Aquí y Allá" stands out--much like competition entries from Abbas Kiarostami ("Like Someone in Love") and Michael Haneke ("Amour")--for being so calm and pensive. Peaceful, almost biblical and completely absorbing, this film is a masterpiece.

Peaceful,

*almost biblical
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masterpiece.*

3



FESTIVALS

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3 COMMENTS

PATRICK MURTHA | MAI 23, 2012 7:32 PM

REPLY

Well, that is interesting, and a new concept, all right. Can you imagine how things would go if the main Cannes jury, or Academy Award voters, or the Swedish Academy that gives out the Nobel Prizes, operated in that way? The attention given to the jurors' reactions, both on the part of the working press and the odds-makers, would entirely eclipse the works under consideration. Talk about feeding the beast. It would be a madhouse. But maybe that is the way the world is headed. Everything is about publicity and marketing, even when it comes to fledgling art-house film-makers. All I can say is, I would not lend myself to be that kind of tool.

PATRICK MURTHA | MAI 23, 2012 2:06 PM

REPLY

How is it that the administrators of the Critics' Week are allowing you as a juror to publish your impressions of the films you are judging, before the jury has announced its prize? This would seem to be a total breach of the ethical standards expected of any artistic prize jury.

RYAN LATTANZIO | MAI 23, 2012 6:57 PM

I, along with the other members of my jury, have been encouraged by the people at Critics' Week to write critiques even before the prize is announced. In fact, we are obligated to do so. They want to encourage critics to be on the jury and to write. It's a new prize, so I think they want to see how this concept works.

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