



ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ

48ο ΦΕΣΤΙΒΑΛ

ΚΙΝΗΜΑΤΟΓΡΑΦΟΥ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ

16-25.11.2007

MINISTRY OF CULTURE

48th THESSALONIKI

INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

MASTERCLASS

PABLO CRUZ - DIEGO LUNA



Introduction by Georges Corraface, TIFF's president, Alexis Grivas, TIFF's international programme coordinator, and George Krassakopoulos, film critic and discussion's moderator.

George Krassakopoulos

There is someone missing from this table, because Canana Films is three people, right?

Diego Luna

Yes, but we don't like to travel with the other one. He stays in Mexico and he does the work while we do the festivals.

Thank you very much for being here. It's amazing to be here in this festival and find out that the people use this festival, which is really what should happen in every festival. You know, festivals have been taken over by markets and by the media, but festivals should be about the audience and the filmmakers. It's as simple as that. It should be an exchange because it gives you the energy to keep going and it also makes our job easier to hear an opinion of what we do.

But I have to say that for us in Canana, this is new. Everything that is happening to us is happening for the first time. We've had this company for two years, almost three years now, and it's been paradise. Personally, I have complained for five years of my life as an actor about the production companies I was working with, how they treat films and how they took care of my work. And basically what I told Gael is that we should own what we do. We, as actors, should make things happen for us instead of waiting for a call to come or waiting for the amazing script to get to us. We should generate those kinds of films. The other idea of having this is because we love cinema and we love theatre and before we were actors or producers, we are part of the audience.

And as audience we want more good films coming from our country; we want to see those amazing filmmakers and those very interesting people to get to be filmmakers more easily and faster because for a long time, cinema in our country was done by very old men; it's true. We would always go and hear the story of my uncle. It was always a point of view that wasn't young and fresh and it didn't have anything to do with my generation. I think that this is an attempt to get our generation to speak to the people and to the audience and it has been most interesting. And these kinds of events make it even easier and nicer and more pleasant for us. So, thank you for being here first and thank you for having us here. It's really one of the best experiences of our lives and I think...

Pablo Cruz

Late last night?

Diego Luna

Pablo is complaining because he's looking for someone in the audience. So, if you are here and you met him yesterday, you know we're talking, just send a note or something. Pablo has been thinking about you.

Pablo Cruz

No, I'm not here to meet Mexicans but to experience the Greek nightlife.

Diego Luna

It's truly a great experience. Yesterday, we had the Q+A for the documentary "J.C. Chávez" and at the beginning I thought everyone was going to leave and then I had the deepest and most profound Q+A of my life and I have to thank you very much for it. We thought about telling you where we come from before telling you what the company is all about. Pablo, do you want to start?

Pablo Cruz

Thank you for coming so early. I cannot find words to express my thanks. It's a pleasure to be here. We want to give a little bit of an introduction as to where our country is, what that means and why

we are doing what we are doing and, as Diego said, how we apply it in reality. I don't know if you want to hear about that, but we'll do it so that you understand and we'll later explain what Canana is trying to do. Why are we doing this? Why is this happening?

Basically, our country is 110 million people who live in extreme conditions of depression in terms of self-identity. You might think that Mexico is a country that is always very proud of its mariachis and tequila, but at this moment we are living in a country that has very little self-value; we're coming out of really bad political decisions and a very bad political life and the economy in our country is probably in its worst moment ever. Everything outside of Mexico always looks shiny but we do think that at the moment Mexico is living a very big crisis of identity because we are letting ourselves be beaten by these situations.

So, coming from that perspective we're trying to also explain the situation of how films are made in Mexico and the situation that we are in -cinema audiences are decreasing instead of growing-, which is also a very big problem, not only because the only source of recuperation and the only way we can make money is in theatrical release. We have a country that is also devastated by piracy; we don't have a DVD industry, which destroys the only other way that we can recuperate, and television is non-existent; although we have one of the largest networks of television in the world, they don't care about films or are not interested. For example, the highest paid film in history for the television network is 150,000 US dollars and that's the maximum they will ever pay.

So, we can only rely on cinema audiences to make our business, which makes everything super complicated. Also, making films is very expensive because there is this luxurious industry and everything is very pricey, so trying to get things done in a cheap way is really fighting a lot of systems and a lot of preconceived ways of doing it. So, it sounds terrible, but I think that the why you now have this entire new cinema coming out of Mexico is precisely because the situation is so bad that things have to happen and people are getting desperate of not having their own voice and of not communicating with the audience. At the end of the day, films are a way of communication; it's trying to reach somebody, hopefully an audience.

At the moment, filmmakers, don't really belong in a group as cohesive as a new wave, like the Italians in the past or the French New wave; and people are really fighting and putting everything on the table to make sure that the message gets across, because at the end of the day, the new Mexican cinema that we are talking about is the only witness of the situation that we are living in our country now. The television does not reflect it; of course, commercial American films do not include what Mexico is and the only witness of our lives is cinema.

Unfortunately, our news are always full of some weird reality that we never know what to make of so, the only reflection of the reality that we live in Mexico is cinema. That's where this whole New Mexican cinema is coming from and just to put the situation into perspective and I hope that you don't get it wrong, it is a bad situation; it is a very rough system to produce and create in. So, it's not like we have an organisation of the government and everything is rosy. It's very complicated for a filmmaker, for a young filmmaker to try and get a film done. And once he's done it, it's more difficult to show it to the audiences. And once he's shown it to the audiences, he's gone bankrupt and he's never going to make another film ever again. I hope this is enlightening enough.

Diego Luna

Thank you also for the therapy of Pablo. He cut it out. It's true and I think that he's missing one other thing. We do struggle a lot with our neighbour and it's tougher for us. We have the longest border with the States and it's not easy for cinema and it's not easy for the country and basically what happens is this: the audience is used to seeing films in English and with subtitles. The audience is not used to seeing films in their own language. In fact, for many years it was kind of cheesy to see a film in Spanish. They would say, "Let's go and laugh a little bit", but it was always this kind

of feeling that they'd rather be or pretend to be American rather than Mexican. Mexican films were about mariachis and, basically, always about a group of people. And cinema in Mexico was always about the high class. You had to pay 5 dollars to go to the cinema and another 5 to pay for your parking and then maybe 6 for a drink or popcorn. So, you needed 16 dollars in a country that pays 5 dollars -which is the minimum wage- per day. Imagine bringing all your family to the cinema in a country like that.

So, the high class really wanted to see our films and what happens also with the recuperation is this: we as producers get our money back after everyone else gets rich, basically. And you pay a ticket, and 16% of that ticket in the cinema goes to the exhibitor, the guy that has the cinema hall and goes to sell popcorn and sodas and advertising on the screen. So, he makes really good business. Then, you have the distributors. It's this company that gets attached to you at the very end of your process. You have your film ready and then someone comes and says "Okay, I'll be the distributor; I'll buy it. I'll pay you whatever money I have because I know you need money". So, they give you the best and they invest, let's say a million dollars in publicity. So, from the first ticket, they get 40% straight to them.

Pablo Cruz

A million pesos.

Diego Luna

A million pesos, yes, which is 100,000 dollars. From that 40%, they take it all back; they'll get their money back and after that, years after, you'll see 20% of the total for you. After they get their money back, you'll never get to see the 60% that the exhibitor is seeing. So, you invested 3 million dollars, let's say, 4 years ago and everyone gets their money back and at that moment you'll start to see money.

So, your film has to be a huge success for you to even get your money back, which has made the investors not like cinema anymore and they just do it for these kinds of events, to have the chance to go to festivals and travel and take their picture with actors and directors and famous people. So, cinema is not a good business and the only way to survive in Mexico now -and it's what we found out would be the next step- is to become a distributor. That's the only way you can see 40% at least back since the first day.

But it's not easy for a Mexican production company to become a distributor and that's where I think Canana fits perfectly because Canana is a reaction of two actors that were doing well and were getting a lot of attention and for us the easiest thing to do was to create a company. We live in a very comfortable Mexico, which is not the Mexico that every company lives in. For us it's easy, because we get offers, we get films and we can make those films happen in our company and we can make phone calls and they will answer the phone call. But for a Mexican to create a company and to be able to do the films that he wants to do it's a struggle that might take years and years of your life. So, today we're living a reaction to this, as Pablo said, and we are starting to think of other countries before our own country. So, we're not making films for Mexicans, which is very sad but it's true. If you can't think of a film that can't work in the States, in England, in Spain, in Latin America, you're doing your own thing. So, early in the morning, it's kind of hard to think that the only way to talk about Mexico is not to think about Mexicans but it's just that the industry is pushing us.

Pablo Cruz

And everyone wants to get their money back which turns filmmakers -which is good in a way- into being more aware of the international market. There's struggle all the time. Any filmmaker would struggle to get his film made. Let's talk more about why we decided to open Canana. I think, as you were saying, there were two guys having a fair amount of energy surrounding them and there was a moment -I was living abroad as well, Gael was living abroad- that Gael and myself were thinking why we're not doing what we're doing in Mexico rather than away from Mexico. And there was a

point where we got together flying on a plane going to Cannes and Gael said, "Why don't we open a company in Mexico and try to make these films?" That's more or less how the company started. But yes, it's a reaction of seeing that something is happening in our country and they have or we have the power to put together people and to use this energy in a positive way and give it back to the country and try to generate a whole new infrastructure or a whole support system that maybe other films can feed of.

Gael spoke to Diego about the company and in a month we were all talking about opening a company in Mexico that deals with cinema in a more free way and also tries to attract television because that's another huge sickness that we have; our television is a disaster. So, we were trying to change something, which basically was very difficult. That's more or less the genesis of Canana during its first few years -the company has been running for two years now as a registered company, but before it existed spiritually because nobody lived in Mexico; we were always working in Los Angeles making a film and everybody was away.

We found a tiny office in Mexico, with one guy sitting, acquiring material and reading. The first person we hired was a guy who did developing and who also lived abroad. So, all we did was reading and getting material and we started buying a few stories, not always a script, not always a book, but things or ideas that people had. And the drive engine of all that was a TV series that we still want to do and I think we're getting closer to getting it done, which was basically the mother of most of the films we've done, which is called "Ruta 32". And the original idea was to put together all the filmmakers in Mexico doing super cheap films in their native state. Mexico has 32 states and we were going to choose one story from each state to be directed from somebody from that state using talent from that state, using music from that state and generating a whole energy through that state. So, not everything would be dependent on Mexico City, which of course is the capital and where everything comes from.

So, that was the engine that was driving us to get all these stories and meet all these people and realising that it was something that we'd do and eventually "Déficit", which is a film that Gael directed last year, is the first episode of that TV series. So, at the end of the day, it's more or less working in the model that we decided, so the only thing that's amusing is not to do the TV show, but the films that we've made -which are too many; we've done five films, four of which you can see now- in a way are based on this model. Apart from "J.C. Chávez" which was generated as a different project, "Drama/Mex" and "Cochochi", they all have in a way that spirit which is not always the ideals of central Mexico and Mexico City but they try to take away the spotlight out of Mexico City and bring it to different places which is also a Mexico that is trying to shout and tell you something about it. We haven't shown anything in Mexico City so far and we probably won't for a while.

Diego Luna

The thing is also that we're trying to get a new team together; we're trying to get new people to shoot films. Something has been happening in Mexico for a while now; that is ten films shot every year and that's just Mexican films that I'm talking about. And then we have another 10 or 15 American productions that didn't have enough money to shoot in the States so they come to Mexico and pay less, make very cheap films -which are called B-movies- but they would pay more than most Mexican films would pay.

Today it's very expensive to shoot a film in Mexico because commercial and American films have made the price really high and for us it's not really easy to pay. So, the people that used to shoot films in Mexico used to get a lot of money and did it basically for the money. What we're trying to do is get people to do films because of the love for films, because of the story. One thing that makes me sick is when your driver doesn't know the story you're telling; when nobody cares about the film you're shooting and they are just there to get their cheque and you as an actor or as a producer understand that the most important thing is the story and who's telling the story.

So, I really get sick when people think that way -I guess it's because of where I come from but when they do films just for the money and for fame and all that. What we're doing in Canana is trying to have a family that cares about the same things, that shares the same passion, which is the best experience ever because we found that family and there are a lot of young people in Mexico that are doing this for the right reasons. It's just that it's not easy for us to get together. There is no scene, there is no industry that gets us together; there is no cultural institute that works for these unions so that they can happen.

Pablo Cruz

We were discussing this in the car and this New Mexican cinema as a movement. I've spoken about this a lot before and what you're saying is right. There are individuals who are just making very particular choices and the quality of the cinema is remarkable, but it's not like we go back to Mexico and sit together in a café to get drunk and discuss cinema in theory.

We need the individuals very much. Gerardo Naranjo, who is one of our directors, never spoke to Francisco Vargas or anyone else about cinematic ideas, about creating a Mexican cinema identity. This is very good, I think, because at the end of the day, we're getting a lot of different versions of this Mexican cinema, which is very important, and at the same time we have films like "Kilometre 31" which was a huge box office success in Mexico and it was the first genre film made in Mexico; it has nothing to do with "Cochochi" but I think it's good and eventually hopefully cinema will become a united voice in a way that will represent us. Nobody is putting these films or talents together. For us, it's very difficult. It's not that we're not trying to be that united voice, but this is not the case.

George Krassakopoulos

Alfonso Cuarón was here a few days ago.

Diego Luna

I'm sorry that needed to happen.

George Krassakopoulos

What?

Diego Luna

That you had Alfonso Cuarón here.

George Krassakopoulos

He said at the end of his conversation that he doesn't believe that cinema should have an ethnic identity and that he doesn't believe in Mexican cinema or Greek cinema or whatever. Do you find it important that Mexican cinema should have a voice? Is this what you are trying to do through Canana?

Diego Luna

No, I agree with Alfonso. I think cinema shouldn't have a passport; cinema should be just stories; what needs to be specific is the story you're telling but I, as a Mexican, can easily tell a story about a Greek guy if I want to and if I know the story and if I'm honest with the story. I think cinema is about human behaviour and that can be understood in any culture and any language. And I think that this is also a reaction to not having a big industry. I see films from other countries, with different languages and from different cultures and still get affected and feel connected to the story.

I think the most powerful thing of Alfonso's "Y Tu Mamá También" is that it is a very specific story about Mexico, but also tells you about the trip we all take when we are around 16, when we are trying to find who we are and what we want to be. And that trip happens to everyone. So, cinema is not that different. Cinema is about individuals; cinema is about a point of view and that's the only thing that matters -the point of view of the guy that is telling the story. At least, that's the cinema I love. When you celebrate the point of view of someone, that shouldn't be something that has to do with nationality.

Pablo Cruz

I agree. The only thing is that we are seen from the outside as this New Mexican cinema and we're saying that there is no New Mexican cinema, but there are people desperate to tell stories. I completely agree with Alfonso. Anyway, as I was saying before, if you are in Mexico, the only way you can defend yourself to the government or to somebody is to try to find an identity of the country through its cinema.

I'm not saying that Mexican cinema should be a banner and we should all be making socially motivated films. But I think that is the only way we can force or persuade the government to move -and it's us that need to do something about it because, yes, what we're doing is constructing the identity of the country. "Yes, we shouldn't be making national cinema but something with a universal language", but inevitably people can see what they see as that identity.

So, for our government to pay attention to what we are doing they should consider that, yes, Mexican cinema has this unit of films and is the representation of its country. And at the moment, it's the only positive thing we have. And when you say that there is a boom in Mexican cinema this is fantastic news; it's great and we should be proud of it. We should be fortified and glad that there's a government that cares about it because there is an industry that is not capable of doing it and we need to subsidize this shape of national cinema, although I agree with Alfonso that it should not be a banner, it should be natural; but that's my country.

George Krassakopoulos

Is the success of Mexican cinema in festivals and abroad reflecting the industry and the audience in Mexican cinema? Do the ideas of the Mexican people about Mexican cinema change?

Diego Luna

It's sad, but no. I mean, for a year or two, we Mexicans cared a lot about what happened with films out of Mexico. I guess the first amazing story for all of us was "Amores Perros". When "Amores Perros" came out, we were all really excited about the film and we would hear in the news about what was happening with the film, but I don't think that matters to the media anymore. I don't know how many Mexican journalists are here but I promise you, it's just you, and maybe you paid your ticket because the films that are winning awards and making noise out of Mexico are not necessarily the films that are getting the audience to the cinemas in Mexico.

Pablo Cruz

I agree.

Diego Luna

Thank you very much. I guess since "Y Tu Mamá También", besides "El Violin", there hasn't been a huge hit or a film I consider amazing and important and beautiful and has been awarded everywhere. There is a difference between the films that people care about and that distributors care about and pay for and between the films we like to do. It's happened to Canana. We have a distribution company because there aren't any distributors that will pay a lot of money for the films that we are doing.

It's also believed that the audience is going to like them and the audience will defend them, but it's not that people are begging to get your films. They don't basically pay for these films and when you go there, they are searching for a laugh, sex, short film, something about young people and all that. And that's the first thing they will look for and if they don't find that, they will tell you it's amazing, but the teens won't get to see the film, because you have 10 other openings every week.

So, imagine you have to fight with 10 films every week, coming out in a country that has 1,000 cinemas and "Spiderman" comes out with 800 copies and the next week you have "Shrek", etc; it's tough to compete. And if you don't have someone powerful next to you, you might fail. So, there are just like two little windows a year to come out with the films we like. And those are the films

that are travelling and are representing Mexico in festivals. I don't think it's helping us anymore. I think that's part of the past and now we have to reinvent ways to promote our films.

Pablo Cruz

"El Violin" is the perfect example.

Diego Luna

That's what I said. "El Violin" is the film that no one wanted to distribute in Mexico and we managed to do it.

Pablo Cruz

What you were saying about sex and drugs and rock n' roll, about what people want to see. "El Violin" is the perfect example. You saw it here in Thessaloniki, right?

George Krassakopoulos

And it's coming out in Greece in a couple of weeks.

Pablo Cruz

So, this is a Mexican film that has the recipe of the never-to-distribute film. It's black and white, it has no sex; the only sex it has is the one that you don't want to see. It has an old man who hardly speaks, the film is long and the music is nothing that we would listen to or buy a soundtrack of -or at least for the majority of the people. And this is a film that is winning and winning every single award everywhere it's going; everyone is writing about it, the press loves it. And nobody wants to distribute it. Nobody wanted to touch this film; nobody wanted to even get close to it.

In fact, the offers that Francisco was getting from these companies were pathetic. He almost had to pay the people to distribute the film. And not that we were the saviours or anything, but we, for sure, saw that something was wrong because this is a film that everybody likes, but nobody wants to bring it to the people. So, we took the chance of taking the reels from the distribution company -that was our first 'go at it'. I have to say that in Mexico it's not that complicated: we only have two cinema chains that are a complete monopoly and in this case it worked and we only had to talk to two people, the owner of one cinema chain and the owner of the other cinema chain. So, that's pretty much it.

We took the chance to distribute the film and this proves that people, the audience, wanted to see this kind of stuff because otherwise it wouldn't have been a success. And a film that had no sex, no drugs and rock n' roll, no young people dancing around, managed to make 2 million dollars, which is a phenomenon. It's never happened before and we are really proud of that. I hate to say that we saved it. It's not that. It just happened and we are very lucky that it happened that way. And it proves that maybe festival recognition and this thing that you are calling Mexican cinema, which now became a genre, is something that people want to see.

People go to the cinema and say, "I want to see "El Violin" and now with "Luz Silenciosa", which is a Carlos Reygadas film, it's happening again. Again, it's a very complicated film for an audience. It's a Mexican film in a foreign language, but people are going to see it. It's working. And people are willing to pay those 20 dollars to go see it in the cinemas. Yes, it happens in a very elitist cultural society, but it's a beginning. There are so many problems that we have to solve but at least people are going to the cinema, and I hope that this will start building two things. First, the quality of the films will have to get better, because the audience decides if they want to see more shit or not. And some good films are coming out, so it becomes a natural selection process for directors to decide what they are going to do. Secondly, the audience will get more educated and they will start opening up their panorama a little more and not putting all Mexican films in one basket; the diversities are helping that.

Georges Choraface

Was it the same age group that started this success of "El Violin" as the age group that goes to the

cinema, or did “El Violin” break out from those who don’t easily go to the cinema?

Diego Luna

I think it was people that were going to the cinemas and basically didn’t have enough films in the cinemas to attend to. It’s the people that go to festivals, it’s people that go and visit Ambulante -which we’ll talk about in a few minutes. I think there is an audience that is searching for culture in Mexico. I’m not saying there is no audience. I’m not saying there is no structure to get to that audience; there’s no money. And it’s not an easy fight and you’ll probably lose because you need time to get to that audience, you need money to become aware of what is happening and also you cannot live with just that audience because that audience allows you to live in a tiny part of Mexico and when you do a film, you want to go everywhere.

So, what is happening is that there are a few cinemas where you know that this audience will go. And if you are there, you are safe, but when you try to go to other parts of Mexico, you’ll find out that it’s really tough because there is no culture of watching cool films. I think there is also something happening in Mexico, which, I guess, happens whenever there is a crisis somewhere and people react. Since the earthquake in 1985, the society started to participate and I think our generation comes from that country that suddenly was in a complete disaster. There was this earthquake in ‘85, during which 40% of the City went down, there were thousands of dead people and homeless people and it got all of us out of our houses to help; suddenly you realized that you are in a country that was alive and society was doing something because the government didn’t have the potential to go and help the people and you would see your neighbors doing something for you and it was a nice exchange. I think that we come from a generation that had to wake up and had to do something and now you can see that in our films, in our music, in everything we’re doing. It’s a generation that thinks life differently, I think.

I was talking to Pablo outside about what we were going to say and we found out that we don’t want the same company.

Pablo Cruz

I’m selling my shares.

Diego Luna

But basically, I do believe that chances are better in Mexico right now; that’s why we got this party out of power in Mexico, it’s the party that happened after the revolution 70 years ago and that party took power for 70 years. I do believe that this is part of what is happening right now, that we do want to change things. Maybe we don’t know how this is going to happen and who is going to do it and maybe we haven’t got together to decide how we are going to do this, but it’s happening.

I’m a very optimistic man and I do believe that I live in a very important time for my country, because I remember in ‘88 there was an election in Mexico and we all knew it was a fraud. We all knew it was botched and nothing happened. We stayed with that president for 6 years and we called him president. And that is something that really got me aware of the necessity to wake up and do something and I believe that my generation has that in mind and it’s not going to swallow it again. It’s not going to say, “Okay, well, this is how things happen in Mexico. Let’s roll out like we always do. It’s good to be Mexican”. I don’t think that’s happening anymore. I do believe – and there is a feeling in Mexico- that young people are going to wake up and things are going to happen and I don’t know if they will happen in a good or a bad way.

Pablo Cruz

Maybe our generation.

Diego Luna

That’s what I’m saying. Our generation was deceived in ‘88; we saw our votes stolen by someone else but we said, “Oh, it’s not going to be him but anyway, let’s keep going”. So, we watched that

and then we had the earthquake and we had Chiapas happening, they killed the candidate in front of all of us in Tijuana. Very strong things happened from 1984 till today and I believe that makes a difference and that it makes cinema in Mexico more exciting, because there are stories to tell and there is a necessity to speak to an audience and to speak to the public and communicate. That's what I think.

George Krassakopoulos

So, in Canana, what is your way of changing this situation in cinema and in general? How do you try to do it?

Diego Luna

Canana, at the beginning, started from the viewpoint that we are the audience, we like cinema and we want to see more of that cinema in Mexican screens; we want to generate work for those interesting filmmakers that are not basically doing films. The first project that we made in Canana was a very interesting one; it's a festival. It's not so much of festival. It's a tour. It all started because we have a friend that did a documentary that won an award somewhere and no one got to see it in Mexico.

The title of the film is "Tropic of Cancer". And this man is called Eugenio Polgovsky and we talked to him and we said, "We have to help you. We have to help you get people to see this film". And Gael said to me "Let's present it in the news and in the cinemas in Mexico". And they do a lot of this in the States and in England where they say "Alfonso Cuarón invites you to" and it's a film of which nobody knows the name or the director and because Alfonso said it, people went to watch it.

So, we thought that this was going to happen in Mexico and we thought we could help this man and we said "Let's put our names on top". And later, we said "Why don't we do that with this film and this film and that other film and that documentary etc." and suddenly we realized that we had the chance to show films that we wanted our friends to see. And that's how we thought about creating a tour that has basically an amount of documentaries that we'd never get to see in cinemas in Mexico, because there is no room for documentaries in commercial cinemas.

So, we said, "Let's do this and travel around Mexico". And Pablo put together a bunch of sponsors and people working for this to happen and basically now it's the third year we're doing it. It's a festival that goes to each city in Mexico and stays there for a week, so you have a week of different films that talk about, not just Mexico, but about the world and what is happening. I think that, through those documentaries, you can ask things and get the answers faster. You can, in a very immediate and very powerful way, make people think about where they live and if they like where they live and if they want to do something about it. I do believe that documentaries are a very powerful weapon to change things and what we decided was to get documentaries to the audience and the audience went to the cinemas and paid for the ticket at the festival and now it's happening and everyone wants to be a part of it. So, that gives me hope.

Pablo Cruz

That's true. The whole point of *Ambulante* was to empower audiences with the tools that the documentary gives you. Again, going back to the situation of the country that we live in, there is hope, but it's very much related to bringing back the people and to making them see, wherever they are from, that they are not alone, that the situation is reflected by other people too. A beautiful experiment is to go to Chihuahua (and you will see how Chihuahua looks like, we'll show you some clips); it's a state in Mexico that makes no sense if you try to explain it in plain English. Showing to the Tarahumara or to the Mennonite audience or to some Mexican away from what we conceive as "normal" Mexicans, an African story set in Tanzania talking about the pollution of a lake -a film called "Darwin's Nightmare"- and to see the reaction to that was an incredible experience.

So, we decided to enhance that experience. To make it happen, we had to partner with one of the two cinema chains; we saw that there were a lot of people who cannot pay the festival ticket, so

we decided to make it free in public places. So, what happens really is that during that week, the festival invades the town and it offers free cinema. We take cinema to the peasants, we take cinema to a lot of people, we open a lot of discussion groups and we have sections in the documentary festival that allow people to change what they are seeing.

From the original question, one of the ways we are trying to contribute to Mexico is be closer to the idea of the country that we would like to live in. So, that's one of the steps: creating *Ambulante*, which took a lot of effort to put together. It's something that we had to invent, it's more like a recipe of "Oh, let's make a traveling festival for documentaries". So, we had a lot to invent and failed a lot of times in order to get somewhere closer to what we want. And yes, it's the third year and hopefully one day Thessaloniki will invite a section of *Ambulante* so you'll get to see all these Mexican documentaries that are completely unreal because of the situation they portray.

George Krassakopoulos

I think we can now see a clip from "Drama/Mex" and talk about it.

Pablo Cruz

Yes, exactly. We take you from there and these are the steps that we do with filmmakers, to get really close. It's the first film that we did and worked on and, again, it's a very particular voice. We found this filmmaker, Gerardo Naranjo, and he was desperate to get his own voice heard. Nobody could listen to him or understand what he was doing and, in a way, we sort of did that and we gave him complete freedom to do whatever he wanted and this is the result.

George Krassakopoulos

Okay. Let's see a clip and then we can talk afterwards.

(screening)

So, this is one of the first films that your company produced, right? And "Drama/Mex" was in Thessaloniki last year in the International Competition.

Pablo Cruz

I know.

Diego Luna

The only films that we want to make in Canana are the films that are done by someone and we get to know them and this is something that I guess doesn't happen in the States. Let me go back. I, as an actor, was doing okay and I got an American agent and they said "Come to the States and meet people so they get to know you and you'll get to work in this country, which is really exciting and we do a thousand films a year so you'll do really well and you'll become rich and do the kinds of films that you want to do". I said, "That sounds amazing. Let's go". So, I took the plane, I flew to L.A. and I started to have meetings, one after the other. I had four meetings a day, you had to drive for an hour to get to one place and they would sit you down in a very comfortable room that didn't smell of anything, you thought it was built by astronauts or something.

You would sit down and two or three guys would come in and sit and ask you what kinds of films you like and what food you like and where you come from and whom you are dressed by and they would say "Thank you very much; see you tomorrow". And they said, "We'll call you" basically and "We'll send you interesting films".

And after a week of being there, I realized I didn't meet anyone. I didn't have names, I had no phone numbers; I had no friends to call. I had no one and everything was very unreal. And the idea of the films we are making is to really get to meet the people and to know them and to admire them, I guess, and then to let them do the film they want to make and not to get in between any decision, but just help them and give them everything they think they need. Those are the kinds of films that

everyone should do: films that are specific and matter to someone because when you're honest with that, then it's going to be someone out there that will care about it.

It's a reaction, I guess, to what was happening; all this attention that was not helping us do anything. So, we went back to Mexico, we said "Okay, let's build this company here". Pablo was living in Barcelona; then he moved to Los Angeles, but we said that we have to live in Mexico and we are. We have to be there, we have to live Mexico, to breathe Mexico, to get to work with the cool Mexican people. We have to be there. We need time to go and get drunk with them and we need time to get to know people.

Gerardo is one of those. Gerardo is the director of "Drama/Mex" and he's a guy that if you ask how he shoots films, you would never help him, or get your money close to that film. He's a very crazy man; he's a guy that doesn't do it the safe way. He makes very crazy decisions that happen to make very amazing films. So, he's a man that you think is crazy and if you don't spend enough time with him, you think that he might be a cheater. But he's not. He's a guy that believes that cinema needs to be done in a completely different way and I think that we have to thank Pablo in Canana, because Pablo was the one that got close to this man and talked him into being part of our family. And today we are shooting the second film with him; we just shot it and now it's being edited and he's one of the most important directors that we've worked with and we want to keep with us. But again, it's all about getting to meet the people and getting to know them and to understand what they care about, what music they like and the issues they have where they live and then let them do whatever they want to do.

Pablo Cruz

That's exactly the formula, or whatever you want to call it and Gerardo applies perfectly to this cinema that we are talking about as Canana. He's the guy that will take all the chances and risks and we agree with that; coming from a cinema that is very expensive and that is very difficult to put together, where the industry is always blocking you and you are trying to change it and you lose your power, including the unions and the whole infrastructure. Gerardo is somebody that we agreed 100% on the way he wanted to shoot. It was just "Take the camera, with whatever money we have in our pockets and let's go to shoot this film in Acapulco with no rules, no trailers, no cars, nothing". And eventually things look good. Don't you think?

Diego Luna

I'm laughing because I remembered something that happened in the last film. I went to the set with Pablo and at some point Gerardo was sitting far away from everyone looking at everything -this is the second film we shot and in the first one he didn't have trailers, he didn't have anything, so in this one he had a bit more. So, he was sitting there and he told me that he had to rethink the whole film because walkie-talkies were fucking up his film. And I was like "Okay! Walkie-talkies! Jesus!" There he comes again! "What's happening, Gerardo? Are you okay? You did great!" And he was like "Look at them! Now they are not thinking about the film; they are thinking about the fucking headsets, you know! I don't want them hearing, I don't want people to hear what I'm saying if I don't go and talk to them; I don't want to tell people from far away what I want them to do!" And I'm like "Man, yes, but you want to close the street and you have a car coming in and you're going to be looking everywhere, so you need the way to talk to them". And you go back and you say, "What film are we doing? What is he thinking when he's shooting his films?" Well, his films are amazing; just amazing.

George Krassakopoulos

But no walkie-talkies in the next film, I think.

Diego Luna

No, definitely not.

George Krassakopoulos

We could see another clip from "Drama/Mex" and then move on to your film.

Pablo Cruz

Okay.

(screening)

George Krassakopoulos

What I find interesting with Canana is that when you see two famous actors making a production company, you expect that they are trying to develop films for them, to find the roles that build their career, but it appears that this is not true with you. We see you trying to bring in other actors.

Diego Luna

We try to be co-directors. We always said that we don't need Canana to keep working but we need Canana to keep wanting to work, to keep loving what we do and to have a family again. There are many directors that I know with whom I cannot work as an actor; they might never get a script or a story in which can fit, but I do want to collaborate with them and there is an amazing feeling of being part of the genesis of the projects. When you're there at the beginning and you throw all these ideas around, it's amazing; it's very exciting and it gives energy and it also gives you time to think of what you want to do and where you want to be as an actor. It gives you the sense that things are happening. Canana is giving, at least to me -I cannot speak for Gael-, a chance to step back and see things not just as an actor; you have some perspective of what other films are doing and then I can choose where I want to be.

George Krassakopoulos

And you choose to direct as well. Both you and Gael Garcia Bernal have made your first films through Canana.

Diego Luna

Yes. We're using Pablo's money to do our films. And I have to say that it happened naturally. This film "J.C. Chávez" that is here was an idea before we even had Canana ready. Canana was just an idea, Pablo was living in L.A. at the time and we got close to Julius César Chávez, we happened to go to and see a fight in Las Vegas and the manager of Julius César got me a seat next to Julius César and I watched it with this man.

And suddenly I realized that I had forgotten about my hero, this amazing person that gave us so much happiness for many years, when we were getting bad news one after the other. The only good thing was that Chávez would win and that was the only celebration we had. So, he was sitting next to me and he was 40 years old and I was looking at him saying, "Shit, I'm an asshole, I'm a bastard, I'm a terrible human being. I forgot about this man". And we forget these stories, I think. So, Pablo convinced me to do the film myself because it sounded really easy at the beginning, like "Okay, I'll do it". But it took me time to believe I could make it and I have to thank Pablo for that.

But then, there's something going on between Gael and I -it's not sexual- in that we got our films ready at the same time. It was the same month when both films were ready to be shown and it felt that we planned this. "Okay, let's build the company, let's get the films ready and come out with the films and travel around the world with our films". But it didn't happen that way. It was just that suddenly I called him and said, "My film is almost ready and I want you to see it" and Gael said that he was almost at the same process. So, again, something happened to us at the same time, which is amazing if you think about it. It's great. It's like when a good friend, some you care about or someone you love, goes through the same issues that you are facing and so you don't feel lonely; it's good to have a friend that I can grow with in a way.

So, "J.C. Chávez" is the best experience that ever happened to me, the most complete one at least. I knew I wanted to direct since I was really young; because of my father -he's a set designer- I've

always been part of the whole process before actors get to the set, but I didn't have the story and I didn't know what to talk about yet and with this film I had the chance to talk about very important themes, which is when power meets fame and what happens there and to talk about the father and the son and to talk about attention and that's Chávez.

George Krassakopoulos

We can see a short clip now.

Diego Luna

And then you can ask Pablo why he produced it.

(screening)

George Krassakopoulos

I suppose you forced him.

Diego Luna

Okay, this is the moment where you are supposed to say things, you know.

(screening)

There's nothing more painful when you have made a film and you watch it when it's not working.

Pablo Cruz

It's a new version.

Diego Luna

In Tribeca, where we had the premiere, the film started and because at the beginning the sound is supposed to come from the middle and it's supposed to be tiny, it all started really well; the place was packed and everything was perfect as I had planned it, and then suddenly, after that the music has to start and when the music has to come, there's nothing coming up. And you could hear some sounds and this was the worst moment of my life.

I wanted to find the people of the festival and get them to stop the film and finally I got them to stop the film and then they say, "It's all fixed, we turned the speakers on". And I'm like "Fuck! It was as simple as turning the speakers on!" "Yes, but we cannot go back to the beginning". And I'm like "What?" and it's the first time I saw Pablo screaming like a maniac to someone and I don't know what he said but it happened suddenly.

And then I had to go and talk to the audience for ten minutes because that's the time it takes to get everything back, so it was a kind of a stand-up comedy trying to get the attention of the audience and make them laugh and it was an hour talking about what happened in the last five years of my life. So, that's how important it is to do a film when you're a director.

George Krassakopoulos

I think we can take questions from the audience now.

Diego Luna

Aren't we going to show more clips?

George Krassakopoulos

I think it's getting late so we could give the audience a chance to ask questions.

Georges Choraface

Can I ask something? Is it true that Canana has merged with Focus and, if so, how much of this power breathing on your neck is going to affect what you're doing and the freedom of your choices?

Pablo Cruz

Merger is a terrible word because this is not the reality. Focus is an independent studio based in New York that belongs to a huge group, Universal, which belongs to General Electrics. So, Focus is

a company of famous filmmakers. What we do is a first group deal. And we're very lucky to be one of the few that have this deal in Latin America; basically, they don't own anything by Canana. The company is owned by the three of us and all they have is the first look option to see everything that we develop. And when we are ready to show the films, they have the first option to shoot them and for that they pay a little money.

Diego Luna

The only way to survive when you have a company is this. It's not easy when you're not rich because it gets a lot of time to get something ready; it gets a lot of time to get stories ready. So, if you're planning to develop scripts the only way to survive is this. I think that for a lot of years in Mexico the biggest issue was no money invested for ideas to become something. Writers were not paid to have an idea, to go and sit down, maybe write something that might not even be a film but just to have the time to focus and make the stories happen in paper for you to read them and say "Let's do this" or "Let's not do that" or "Let's keep working for another year on that".

So, money for development is something that we need in Mexico. I guess it's like everything. No one in Mexico thinks about the next ten years. They think about the next year or the next six years when that president is there. So you see at the beginning of the year that everyone is doing things and there are hospitals and big events and then two years before the president leaves, no one does anything; no one wants to compromise anything because they know that the power is going to change so they say "I don't want to give you my little baby".

So, they wait for the next president. And that happens on every level in Mexico and writers suffer a lot from that because it takes them time to get a script ready. So, basically most of the times they write after they come home from a job, from the restaurant where they work or from television and so on, so, it's done by working four hours at night. That's not the way to work. And with this money they give us, we have the chance to develop things and also a chance to show that you need distribution companies to get involved in your projects, otherwise nothing happens.

Pablo Cruz

It's a relationship that works backwards and forward.

Diego Luna

And I know that Pablo keeps them really happy. He does it really well. He knows how to deal with them.

George Krassakopoulos

And there are good guys in America.

Pablo Cruz

Yes. But very few good guys.

George Krassakopoulos

Υπάρχει κάποια ερώτηση από το κοινό;

Diego Luna

Don't get scared. There's no one from General Electrics.

From the audience

I'm thinking my question now as I'm talking. A few years ago I thought of a production company in Greece trying to make Greek films and trying to improve Greek cinema, hoping that Greek films might actually travel somewhere, sort of like you've done. But I have no idea how to do it, I haven't done it and hearing you talk has made me feel a bit worse instead of feeling a bit better, because you're saying that you have a company in Mexico, where there are a hundred ten million people even poorer than Greeks, but still films are being made. These films are in Spanish, and there are so many more millions in the world speaking Spanish, but only ten million Greeks here that speak Greek and a few more around the world. So, to make a film, the story is important and the vision

of the director and the acting too, but the language is a very big thing, I believe. So, what advice would you give someone?

Diego Luna

I have to say that I think you shouldn't worry at all about that. I was worried a lot about that and I realized that it doesn't matter. I still go to every festival and I speak a different language and talk to the audience and the people remember me from the films in Spanish and the only film everyone wants to talk to me about is "Y Tu Mamá También". And that was made seven years ago in a language that you don't know, but people got connected with the film.

So, I think that our cinema is that; the images can stay with you forever and it's as simple as that, I think. And I see bigger numbers of "Y Tu Mamá También" in England or in the States than I do in Argentina or Chile, where they speak the same language. So, it's cinema and cinema is powerful; it stays there and it's about images and sounds and ideas. And that is really powerful and it doesn't matter what language you speak; it's about how honest you are with your work. And people will recognize that and if they don't at least you can go to bed and sleep well because you did it right. You can feel okay because you did it well. I do believe -and this sounds very stupid and simple- that if you care about it, there is going to be someone out there who cares about it. You're not alone and I think that people will respond. So, if you care about it and it is something that matters to you, it is going to matter to someone else, I think.

From the audience

Buenas tardes. This is all the Spanish I know. Well, I don't know how to ask this question so I'm going to be very direct. It's a question for Diego. How do you treat erotic scenes? In "Y Tu Mamá También" you had a lot of them and with beautiful women. So, how do you remain somebody else? It really matters.

Diego Luna

I don't know if I'm glad that a man asked that. I was waiting for that because I see so many girls here. "Can I ask about sex?"

Pablo Cruz

They asked the same question in Japan.

Diego Luna

Yes. I believe that acting is, in a metaphoric way maybe, but it's the same. You have to be able to make it in front of the audience and show everything and work with the simple stuff that you're made of basically, which is your emotions, and getting naked is the same process; acting is about that, I guess. It's like jumping into a cold pool. It's terrible when you think about it and if you spend a lot of time thinking about it you might never do it but if you jump, then you swim for 30 seconds and then you're fine; you don't want to get out, in fact, because out there is really cold.

Once you're naked in front of a camera and you are relaxed and the other actor is relaxed and the director is relaxed, then there's nothing more pure and beautiful happening and sex is not sex; it's far away from sex, it's far away from being a horny experience. I think that as an actor, the first thing you're working with is your body, so you have to be proud of your body and your body has to help you to get the audience to believe what you want them to believe. It's the first thing you have to work with in order to make the character believable.

I have no problem with those scenes. I did a film called "El Búfalo De La Noche" and it's a film that talks about two kids, but the way they communicate is through sex, it has more sex than words; the kids are unable to say anything to each other. And I think that talks a lot about my generation. Today we have sex before we even know the name of the other person. We love the idea of getting drunk and having sex the same night and waking up the next morning and seeing who's next to us and realising whether we want to be there having a coffee, talking and then sex happening. So,

if you want to talk about our generation, you have to talk about sex. Today we live with the idea of AIDS, with condoms, so, if you want to do films about what's happening, you have to be able to be cool about those scenes.

From the audience

What is the most difficult part of being an actor?

Diego Luna

What is the most difficult part of being an actor: to not forget who you are and to not forget about your life and all the instruments that you work with. It's your own experience. Don't forget about you, basically. When you're not doing well, it's easy to not forget about you because you have a lot of time off, but when things start to happen it's easy to give up your own life and pretend to be somebody else from one film after the other and after the other.

It's not easy to say "Hold on" and then go on and experience things. I think that the material we get happens when we're not working, so you have to be strong enough and say "I'm going to give myself a holiday" and go watch another film. It's important not to forget to be aware of what is going on. I think that curiosity is the most important attribute for an actor. You need to be curious about what happens out there; you need to be curious about what happens in other countries, you need to read the papers, you need to watch other people's films, you need to listen to music, to scratch somebody else's back and find out how they react. You have to be curious and that's not easy because it's always about you and they take pictures of you and they do a different style on your hair and your look and you become a character and they ask questions about you and how you got there and it's tough to remember that what really matters is not you, but the reaction of what you do, so, you have to care about who's in front of you all the time.

From the audience

It's a simple question. What does Canana mean? And what is the story behind the name?

Diego Luna

That's a good question. Pablo doesn't want to be rude but he needs to pee. He hated your question and he's going to leave the room. He wants to get rid of me too. Canana is the belt, the revolutionary belt where you put the bullets; that's a canana and I have to say that we got the name in a stupid way. Gael came up with that idea and at the beginning it sounded to me a little bit pretentious and I said "They are going to expect revolutionary films from us and what if we want to do a commercial film, like a comedy or a romantic film?" And Pablo agreed with me and we said, "Let's have an easy name that doesn't mean much". At that time, it was four of us. So, basically Gael and the other guy called Carlos Mesta wanted that name and Pablo and I didn't. So, we decided to play it in a little football table game and we won the first one. It was to 15 goals and we won it. So, Gael said "No, but you have to win 2 out 3" and then the bastard won twice and we had to call it Canana. And today we love the name, but at the time we were disappointed because we loved the other one and since then it's been like that all the time.

From the audience

What impressed me very much from what you were saying is how you were looking for a community and a family rather than just working with other people. And I would like to ask you, in your trips around the world, do you find other companies like that? Do you see that there are many people in different countries, in the States or in Europe, who have the same philosophy and the same need that you have? And another silly question, perhaps. Are you also interested in or do you do theatre?

Diego Luna

I think there are many companies like ours. Michael Winterbottom and has a company with Andrew Eaton called 'Revolution'. When I came back from England, I said to Pablo "This is perfect! This

company works so perfectly and they are a family and the company is in London where you can do this and there's a huge glass so there's no wall and you always see the whole company working and it's just a big room where everyone is sitting and sharing and looking at each other and that's where the company is based on and they work everyday".

And on Thursday from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m., they open the doors and they have beers and they all talk about what they are doing and how the team is doing and they all know about each other and they spend time with each other. And I thought that was perfect and it's not because I'm an alcoholic, but the idea to want to stay in your office after you're done, that makes life different.

There are a lot of people working in a place they don't like, they share things with people that they don't want to share, wake up with a woman they don't love. We have to make sure we are doing it with the people that we want to be with and we are doing what we want to be doing; that we are happy with the way we are. If you open the door, you say, "Do you want to stay or do you want to go? If you want to stay, then let's make films". And I think they work like that. And I'm sure there are many other companies like that; I know a few others.

What was the other question? About theatre. We as Canana don't have enough to do films but myself as an actor I've worked more in theatre than in cinema and I do believe that's the best way to keep the muscle working and fit. I think theatre gives an actor everything you need to defend yourself in the world. It gives you the chance to share an exchange with the audience, to realise what the effect of what you are doing is and change and grow with it. There's nothing more beautiful and simple than theatre.

I love the idea of theatre, you know, someone watching you, all these lights, you have a story to tell and it can happen anywhere. With cinema, it's four years of your life and a lot of struggle and theatre is immediate and it's something that happens between you and the audience and makes that day special in your life. I love theatre.

George Krassakopoulos

I'm afraid we don't have any more time for questions. I want to thank you for being here and being so eloquent and so funny and interesting. Ευχαριστούμε που ήσασταν κι εσείς εδώ. Thank you very much.

Diego Luna

Thank you very much.

