
Hollywood Discovers Brazil. First LA Brazilian Film Festival Is On

Contributed by Eduardo Correia
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The First Los Angeles Brazilian Film Festival (LABRFF) is being held in Los Angeles this weekend. It opens today, March 7 and lasts until Sunday, March 9. LABRFF co-founders Meire Fernandes and Nazareno Paulo Neto say that 35 Brazilian films will be shown. Many are premiering.

The mission of the Los Angeles Film Festival, according to its promoters, is "to support and promote the exhibition of films from Brazilian filmmakers. LABRFF is committed to providing the Brazilian independent filmmaker a venue to screen their films to network with other filmmakers and industry people."

On Thursday, March 5, the Brazil Foundation which co-hosts the festival held a party for supporters of the Foundation. Lillian Miller led the program and organized the large party which was held at the Milkin Foundation in Santa Monica.

Thereza Maria Machado Quintella, Consul General of Brazil in Los Angeles, was honored for her support of Brazil Foundation and of the Film Festival.

The festival opens with a red carpet ceremony at 6 pm, followed by an Opening Ceremony and then the world première of "Bellini and the Devil." A cocktail party will be held at ten pm. During the next two days screenings start at 10 each morning and run until 10 pm. Special film awards will be given out during the closing night ceremony.

The five categories of the festival include features or full length films, documentaries, animation, shorts and action sports. Five thousand people are expected to attend.

Films are being shown at the Landmark, West Los Angeles, 10850 West Pico at Westwood Boulevard. This theater is new and one of the most luxurious and popular in the city. For more information contact www.labrff.com .

The opening film, "Bellini and the Devil", is a 90 minute thriller directed by Marcelo Galvão and produced by Theodoro Fontes. The cast includes Fabio Assunção, Nill Marcondes, Luisa Curvo and Marília Gabriela.

In this film, detective Bellini is in a tough situation with his personal life. He has no cases to solve, his bills are mounting up, and he is psychologically unstable. He is trusted to be in charge of Dora Lobo's office during her holidays. While doing this he pushes his life into a new direction, trying to solve his many problems.

Fourteen films are being shown on Saturday. The first film shown, "The enlightened Capoeira" in the Action/Sports category is a Luiz Fernando Goulart directed documentary that was inspired by the book Mestre Bimba - Corpo de Mandinga by Muniz Sodré. It tells the an enchanting story of capoeira. Nina Luz and Claudia Castello produced the film.

Saturday afternoon is highlighted by a documentary about Oscar Niemeyer. The film, "Life is a Breath of Air," tells about the important Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer. The film features interviews with him and talks about the construction of Brazilian capital Brasília. The film is directed by Fabiano Maciel and produced by Bianca De Felippes.

Saturday afternoon also features an animated film, "Wood and Stock-Sex, oregano and Rock n' Roll". This 81 minute film was directed by Otto Guerra and describes a New Year's party in 1972. At the party the characters are enjoying a purple haze coming from a Brazilian flower. When the fireworks explode, 30 years have suddenly passed and characters, having grown old and potbellied, have to face a world far more difficult and consumer oriented than in 1972.

The first feature film on Sunday is "The Island of the Earthbuster". The story is about a group of children who with the help of animals threatened with extinction, face the dangers of the forest and the sea. They are trying to reach Earthbuster Island to rescue Mrs. Tude, who is the greatest storyteller in the world. If they save her they can save the Atlantic Rainforest. It is a children's ecological narrative

Other films premiering are "Adagio sostenuto" directed by Pompeu Aguiar and produced by Ana Cristina Wsawene Pompeu Aguiar; "Big Game" directed by Steve Dieveney and produced by Gerson Sanginitto and "Noel - the Samba Poet" directed by Ricardo Van Steen and produced by Marcelo Vasconcellos Torres.

The festival also features panels. On March 8th the panel discussion is : "International Co-Productions with Brasil: Myth or Reality?" On March 9th the panel is on "New Media: The Democratization of Cinema."

LABRFF has been established to support independent filmmakers from Brazil and offers a venue for their showing their works in the United States. Over 100 films are made in Brazil each year. This film festival should encourage and promote these films and filmmakers.