

American Museum of the

Moving Image

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LOLAFILMS: CREATING A NEW SPANISH CINEMA

April 30–May 9, 2004

Special thanks to Leon Siminiani for curatorial assistance.

Sunday, May 9

2:00 p.m.

ANTARCTICA (ANTARTIDA)

Spain, 1995, 96 mins. 35mm print courtesy Lolafilms and Ventura Entertainment.

Directed by Manuel Hueriga. Written by Francisco Casavella. Produced by Andrés Vicente Gómez. Original Music by John Cale. Photographed by Javier Aguirresarobe. Edited by Ernest Blasi. Production Design by Jorge Déniz. Art Direction by Jorge Déniz. Principal Cast: Ariadna Gil (as María), Carlos Fuentes (Rafa), José Manuel Lorenzo (Velasco), Francis Lorenzo (Inspector), Walter Vidarte, Juana Ginzo (Grandmother), Iñaki Aierra, Ángel de Andrés López (Matón), Marc Martínez, Cristina Hoyos (Dueña del bar), John Cale (Cale).

4:15 p.m.

THE SPELL OF SHANGHAI (EL EMBRUJO DE SHANGHAI)

Spain, 2002, 120 mins. 35mm print courtesy Lolafilms and Ventura Entertainment.

Directed by Fernando Trueba. Written by Trueba, from the novel by Juan Marsé. Produced by Andrés Vicente Gómez and Cristina Huete. Photographed by José Luis López-Linares. Edited by Carmen Frías. Art Direction by Salvador Parra. Costume Design by Lala Huete. Principal Cast: Fernando Tielve (as Dani), Aida Folch (Susana), Ariadna Gil (Anita/Chen), Fernando Fernán Gómez (Capitán Blay), Eduard Fernández (Forcat), Antonio Resines (Kim) Rosa María Sardà (Betibú).

Antarctica (Antartida)

Synopsis of film from Lolafilms catalogue:

Road movie in which two young no-hopers, Rafa and María, steal a consignment of heroine and head off across Spain with the drugs' owner, Velasco, hot on their tail. Velasco, in turn, is being followed by the police. Set against John Cale's beautiful soundtrack, "Antartida" follows María and Rafa's journey across Spain, focusing on María's own particular inward journey to the ends of herself.

The Spell of Shanghai (El Embrujo de Shanghai)

From a review by Jonathan Holland for *Variety*, April 17, 2002:

Drama is set in Barcelona after the Spanish Civil War, when the country was in the grip of poverty. Early scenes are heavy with explanatory voiceover as 14-year-old Dani (Fernando Tielve, from *The Devil's Backbone*), an orphan and would-be artist, is employed to take care of the aging, eccentric anti-Francoist Capt. Blay (Fernando Fernan-Gomez).

Concerned about how factory smoke is affecting people's health, Blay suggests Dani paint a portrait of sickly consumptive Susana (pretty newcomer Aida Folch) for an anti-industry campaign.

Susana's mother is local sex symbol Anita (Ariadna Gil); her father is Kim (Antonio Resines), a resistance fighter and living legend whom Susana rarely sees. A colleague of Kim's, shabby-looking Forcat (Eduard Fernandez) arrives at Anita's house, and Forcat and Anita start going out together. Meanwhile, the kids' relationship becomes a delicately wrought portrayal of first love, which generates many of the movie's more vibrant scenes.

When Susana wonders about her father, Forcat starts to tell Kim's story. From this point on, pic shuttles between color (representing the present) and B&W; the latter may be either history or fantasy—a question that is unresolved until its dramatic denouement.

Forcat says that after agreeing to cross over into France and bring back the family of injured colleague Denis (Jorge Sanz), Kim was sent to Shanghai to protect his boss's Chinese wife and to take revenge on the Gestapo colonel who tortured and shot him. On arrival, Kim is drawn into the Shanghai underworld, portrayed in all its Hollywood-noir cliches.

The story, as told by Forcat, enchants the two kids -- particularly Susana, who is thrilled at her father's heroic status. Quickly they fall under the Shanghai spell.

Most of the main performances are excellent, particularly from Fernan-Gomez as the cantankerous but oddly admirable Blay -- he gets all the best lines and makes the most of them; Fernandez as the strangely ambiguous Forcat; and Folch, once she warms up in the later scenes, as the bedridden Susana. Unfortunately, in the central role Tielve struggles to breathe life into a part that is just too passive to sustain interest.

Trueba is a master of mood, and [the film] swings easily from the large set pieces (Shanghai constructed on large sets in Barcelona and Madrid) to the intimate and the poetic. However, with a stronger sense of the poverty of postwar Spain, there would have been a greater urgency to the kids' need to escape into the stories that Forcat tells them.

Lush orchestral score by Antoine Duhamel is inspired by '40s Hollywood, as is much of the rest of [the film], with its plethora of cinematic references.

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