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Journals: Part II

Guantanamera

The movie *Guantanamera* is a classic film that came out of Cuba in the year 1995. It portrays the culture and lifestyles of various people living in Cuba while focusing in on two unrelated groups of people traveling for different reasons. These groups of a family bringing a deceased member back to Havana and some trucker men end up running into each other on their journeys while causing some love friction among other things.

What I liked most about this film is the way they were able to tell a sad story about bringing a dead family member to the last spot they will ever be in a manor which made laughter and happiness outweigh the sadness. I suppose this could be due to the use of romance and love. One of my favorite parts was earlier in the movie when Mariano was forced to hide from Marilis. It fully shows the existence of Machismo in Latin culture because of the male support Mariano received. More than that, it showed the family strength when the larger woman also stood up for Mariano.

My other favorite qualities of this film were the songs chosen to accompany multiple scenes and the old cars driven all over Cuba.

Strawberry and Chocolate

The film *Strawberry and Chocolate* surprised me due to its highly risky topic of the existence of homosexuality in the early 90s in a communist ran Cuba. Published in 1993, *Strawberry and Chocolate* sought to change the idea that homosexuals are bad, evil and against the communist regime. At the same time, it wanted to project the idea that not all communists are closed minded and not open to change. Of course, these are my thoughts about what it was trying to communicate

What made me really enjoy this movie was the character development between Diego and David. The idea of combining a homosexual with a communist and make them become friends is intriguing, and doing so in Cuba is crazy. The situation is perfect from the get go, because with today's focus on sexual freedom everyone naturally is wanting to support Diego and be against David; however, when this movie was made I have a feeling that more people would have been supporting David, especially in Cuba.

I was surprised to find out that the director of *Strawberry and Chocolate* also directed *Guantanamera*. It pleases me to know that through thick and thin, ups and downs, and good times and bad times there are people in this world who can communicate, through art forms, what they love, hate, envy, hope for, and wish for in their country and community.

Bitter Sugar

Bitter Sugar, another film from Cuba, was brought to public eyes in 1996. Beyond the love story between two characters, Gustavo and Yolanda, I believe this movie was made to break the silence that lingers about the true hardships people have to deal with living in the Communist ran country. That is to say, this movie

displays the amount of control possessed by the Cuban government, and how they choose to mandate what the people living in Cuba are doing.

For me personally, the part that was most shocking and hard to watch was after Gustavo displayed his support for the revolution by refusing to leave a tourist only restaurant. The “re-education” about where the new Cuba was headed was no less than torture.

I would like to say the love story ended happily ever after; however, I believe that politics defeated the strong forces of love in this situation. Although Gustavo and Yolanda instantly were attracted to each other, unfortunate events drew them apart. It was sad to see prostitution end up being Yolanda’s job, because if the government would pay educated workers more money, more legitimate job opportunities would exist creating a better living situation.

Havana, the Art of Making Ruins

After watching this documentary, I had an interior dilemma going on in my head. I wasn’t sure if I supported the preservation of Cuba’s culture or if I wanted a revolution and a modernized Cuba. As I have learned through these films, Cubans live lives full of despair, troubles and little money, but somehow manage to find happiness in small things. What I am unsure of; however, is whether or not there is a strong group that fully supports the direction Cuba is going or if there is a group that sincerely fears the consequences of contradicting the status quo of the government.

This documentary brings the grim truth out of Havana by showing the lack of process and advancement in the main cities of Cuba. To me it raises the question, how can a leader of such a large amount of people let those people live such low quality lives

while the leader lives very comfortable? How is this humanly possible? Modern day ruins are being “made” or rather are being created due to Cuba’s government and its lack of attention and funding to the building that serve the people of Cuba.

Between Pancho Villa and a Naked Woman

Coming out of Mexico in 1996, *Between Pancho Villa and a Naked Woman* was one of my favorite movies we have seen this year. I think this is because of early classes that have involved Pancho Villa, and I thought it was a very unique way to infuse Mexican culture with a modern day setting.

The love affair between Gina and Adrian seems to be a common style of relationship in Latin America. There is a huge problem with the “machismo” lifestyle that puts men in a superior position of power, and takes the liberty of life out of the female by giving her specific daily roles. This film presents the topic of machismo by developing a genius character who personifies Pancho Villa due to his connection with the historical figure in his works as an author. His personification of Pancho Villa eventually takes over who Adrian actually is, and ruins his relationship with Gina, because all he ever wanted was sex.

On a personal level, I liked how this movie brought the topic of machismo up in this manor, because it might educate more people about the harsh reality that goes on with relationships ruled by machismo. Women need to stand up for their wants and desires just as strongly as men do.

The Forgotten Ones

The Secret of Romelia

