



Dark Blue Almost Black / Azul Oscuro Casi Negro
By Daniel Sanchez Arevalo

EUROPA CINEMAS LABEL
VENICE DAYS / GIORNATE DEGLI AUTORI 2006

PRESS REVIEW



Sogepaq books multiple deals for *DarkBlueAlmostBlack*

Jennifer Green in Madrid

09 September 2006 04:00

Spain's Sogepaq has closed a string of sales on well-received Venice Days entry *DarkBlueAlmostBlack* (*AzulOscuroCasiNegro*) which screens in Toronto's Visions programme.

The sales, closed in Venice, were to Arsenal for Germany and Austria, Frenetic Films for Switzerland, Cineart for Benelux, Budapest Film in Hungary, Strada in Greece and Arthouse Traffic in Ukraine. The company is fielding interest in France and Italy.

The debut feature from award-winning short film director Daniel Sanchez Arevalo screened to repeated applause last Monday as part of Venice Days. Yesterday it was announced that the film had won the Europa Cinemas Label at the festival. The label is voted on by four Europa Cinemas exhibitors.

The film has had an extended play in Spanish theatres through distributor Alta Films after taking three top prizes at the Spanish Film Festival of Malaga in March. It has taken close to \$1.1m (Euros 850,000) off 157,000 admissions.

DarkBlueAlmostBlack is about a young man forced to take over his father's menial job when the latter suffers a stroke, putting his own desires on hold but learning much about himself and his real objectives in the meanwhile.

Source: *Screendaily.com*, 09 September 2006, Jennifer Green



Posted: Fri., Sep. 8, 2006, 8:05am PT

'Dark Blue' floats to the top at Venice

Arevalo's debut pic scores Europa Cinemas prize

By ARCHIE THOMAS

LONDON — Spanish helmer Daniel Sanchez Arevalo's comedy "Dark Blue Almost Black" ("Azul Oscuro Casi Negro") has scooped the Europa Cinemas Label, which is awarded to the best European film in the Venice Days section of the Venice Film Festival.

Arevalo's pic about how people struggle against their pre-ordained destiny was selected by four Europa Cinema exhibs who praised the film's "delightful light touch."

The kudos will be dished out at the closing ceremony of the Venice Days section on Sept. 9.

The prize runs deeper than a few giddy minutes on the podium for first-time director Arevalo: the pic will receive extended theatrical exposure and beefy promotion on the Europa Cinemas network — 1,562 screens in 664 cinemas in 59 countries.

The network, instituted in 1992, provides financial support to cinemas that commit themselves to the programming of a significant number of non-domestic European films and to the organization of promotional activities concerning European films for young audiences.

Sogepaq is selling "Dark Blue Almost Black," which is a Tescela Producciones Cinematograficas production.

Source: Variety.com, 08 September 2006, Archie Thomas



Posted: Tue., Apr. 11, 2006, 5:41pm PT

Darkbluealmostblack
Azuloscurocasinegro
(Spain)

An Alta Classics release (in Spain) of a Tesela P.C. production with the participation of TVE, Canal Plus. (International sales: Sogepaq, Madrid.) Executive producer, Jose Antonio Felez. Directed, written by Daniel Sanchez Arevalo.

With: Quim Gutierrez, Marta Etura, Raul Arevalo, Antonio De La Torre, Hector Colome, Eva Pallares, Manuel Moron, Ana Wagener, Roberto Enriquez.

By Jonathan Holland

Debutante helmer Daniel Sanchez Arevalo more than delivers on the promise he showed with his series of well-received shorts with "Darkbluealmostblack," an assured and captivating drama that combines grit and grace into a distinctive, character-based whole. Featuring a range of attractive characters aiming at self-reinvention, tragicomic item is not content to be straight-up social realism, and essays some tricky maneuvers before coming through with flying colors. Offshore buyers seeking a glimpse of authentic new Spanish talent should take a look, while fest exposure is guaranteed. Pic took three awards at the Malaga fest.

Janitor Jorge (Quim Gutierrez) is tending to his sickly father Andres (Hector Colome), whose stroke he feels he has helped provoke and whose job he has had to take over, thus putting his own larger plans on hold.

Jailbird Paula (Marta Etura, heavily made up against type) meets Jorge's brother Antonio (Antonio de la Torre) at a theater workshop set up for inmates, and within seconds they're having sex in the wings.

Jorge spends his afternoons on the roof of his building with buddy Israel (Raul Arevalo). He also receives postcards from childhood sweetheart Natalia (Eva Pallares), who is studying in Germany. The various couplings overlap into dramatically dangerous terrain that many helmers would play simply for laughs, but which here open up a series of morally complex questions on the issue of love -- while delivering a few smiles along the way.

Thematically, the pic features a well-worn subject, i.e. the personal and sexual confusion of twentysomethings. But the treatment is distinctive, with plotting often working by reverse logic, where we see consequence before cause.

The story dealing with Israel's gayness may be over-protracted, but the script gets through it with some moments of well-judged, knowing humor and searching perfs.

None of the cast are top-flighters in Spain. As the protag, Quim Gutierrez plays Jorge as softspoken and controlled, but there is a tension simmering in him that blows up over the last half hour. Antonio's energy works in superb counterpoint, and de la Torres works him up into a fine comic creation -- though he loses sympathy through the final reel. All the characters are the victims of interesting psychological conflict, the script cleverly setting them off against one another.

Visuals are sometimes authentically witty. Lensing is crisp, often using low lighting to emphasize the claustrophobia of the character's lives, per the title. Eye-catching, fluid editing makes a key contribution to the pic's idiosyncratic style.

Pascal Gaigne's score, though effective, is sometimes an aural photocopy of Michael Nyman. The intriguing title refers, symbolism apart, to the color of a suit that Jorge keeps seeing in a shop window and which symbolizes his business future.

Camera (color, widescreen), Juan Carlos Gomez; editor, Nacho Ruiz Capillas; music, Pascal Gaigne; art director, Federico Garcia Cambero; sound (Dolby Digital), Jaime Barros. Reviewed at Malaga Spanish Film Festival (competing), March 23, 2006. Running time: 105 MIN.

Source: Variety.com, 11 April 2006, Jonathan Holland



Parallel to the official selection in Venice is the sidebar "Giornate degli autori", which presents a remarkable variety of works, many of them debut features.

(...) This year the "Venice Days" (Giornate degli autori) – similar to the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes – bring together a dozen films which, in their extreme diversity, confirm the importance of this showcase for new talent. The sidebar is only in its third year, and this outing marks the debut at the helm for the renowned Italian critic Fabio Ferzetti, of the newspaper *Messaggero*, paired with the organisational talent of Sylvain Auzou, a Frenchman based in Rome. Comparisons with the Directors' Fortnight in Cannes or the Forum in Berlin are far from misplaced, given that all three events are affiliated to the Europa Cinemas Label, which aims to encourage the circulation and diversity of European cinema. To this end, the Giornate not only show films but organise innumerable meetings, dinners, debates and surprise screenings of historical curiosities, all staged in the welcoming surroundings of a villa set in lush gardens away from the bustling festival centre.

A week into the festival, the third Giornate degli autori are proving a resounding success with both critics and cinemagoers. Screenings are invariably packed and audiences often vocal in their enthusiasm, which can't always be said of the official selection... "The spirit of the Giornate is an extension of that behind the defunct 'Window on Images' section," explains Fabio Ferzetti, who was a collaborator on the latter for four years. He professes a passion for real eclecticism: "We want to mix documentary and fiction, introduce audiences to new filmmakers and, above all, show films which will make a difference."

This certainly holds for a film such as *Farewell Falkenberg*, the debut by Swedish director Jesper Ganslandt. The audience follows the emotional and existential ups and downs of two adolescents, oscillating between vivacity and ennui in the small town of their childhood. Ganslandt's Scandinavia exudes the malaise of well-heeled civilisation, with its indifferent opulence, where even the most intimate family relationships seem to be governed by contractual partnerships and all conflicts are infinitely pacified. The film is punctuated by wonderful moments, graceful and musical – the two boys tripping on magic mushrooms, an idyllic time spent bathing. Its take on its characters is fresh, down-to-earth, fond and unjudgemental, though it leaves little room for optimism. (...)

Another debut feature – and surely one of the best to come out of Spain in many a year – is ***DarkBlueAlmostBlack*, by Daniel Sánchez Arévalo**. Despite the slight confusion and overloading with ideas often displayed by first films, this urban drama – cast in a strangely nordic, cold blue light – is brimming with confident and sophisticated charm. Slightly skewed and elusive, analytical, ironic and almost Cartesian (that is, French) in its form and morals, it follows an exemplary group of emotionally retarded youths as they go through their identity crises. Two brothers, their friend and a woman become embroiled, displaying all the touching clumsiness of their age. (..)

Source: adapted from *Libération*, 6/09/2006, Olivier Séguret (excerpts)