FILM EUROPE
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# A Bad Actor - an unflinching drama for the post #MeToo era

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On July 11, the Mexican drama A Bad Actor, set in an ambivalent filmmaking environment, will enter cinemas. It premiered last year at the Tallinn Black Nights International Film Festival, where director Jorge Cuchi's 2020 film 50 (o Dos ballenas se encuentran en la playa), an adaptation of the internet phenomenon known as the 'Blue Whale Challenge', won the Youth Jury Prize. His second feature film is even more critical, inviting the audience into a dialogue of moral values and to unravel the timely and urgent theme of consent.

## The ambivalence of the film industry

Sandra and Daniel are two promising young faces of Mexican cinema. Under the tutelage of an established director, they develop strong chemistry during filming. This takes a turn when they film a sex scene - Sandra confides in a few crew members that she was raped by Daniel during the scene. Daniel fiercely defends himself and insists on his innocence. On the one hand, in escalating tension, we see a search for the truth, on the other hand we see the dirty inner workings of the industry, with the crew attempting to hide the incident from the public eye.

As in his debut, Cuchi mercilessly criticises the power of social media to sell a distorted image of would-be everyday life. He provocatively presents an uncomfortable spectacle in the form of a thriller, and shows just how thin the line is between one's personal life and their media image. The filmmaker seamlessly layers contrasting and often contradictory issues on top of one another, which slowly dissolve the seemingly unshakable concept of truth.

## Authentic volatility

The film is shot with a predatory camera, drawing on documentary techniques - the handheld work encourages emotional dislocation, ambiguity and makes present a micro-world where nothing is either certain or obvious. The overall cinematography and image is deliberately fragile, imperfect and disorienting, highlighting the obscurity between agreement and disagreement - along with dynamic editing and the slow-burn pace of the narrative, it creates a shape that is attractive to the viewer, but one that is painful and also uncomfortable given the subject matter. The conflict stems not only from the attitudes of the central couple, but more importantly from how those closest to them and the wider community approach the case.

## A sample of Mexican cinema

A Bad Actor comes to Czech cinemas straight after its Mexican premiere in April. It's one of the few Mexican titles to be distributed in the Czech Republic - there are usually only two or three a year. Last year, for example, Film Europe released Robe of Gems, set on the Mexican periphery, and this October it will present La Cocina, a black-and-white drama set in the hectic gastro industry. Although Jorge Cuchi has already celebrated his 60th birthday, his two films sharply reflect on the issues of today's digital world. With the screening of A Bad Actor, you can get at least a partial picture of what contemporary festival films from Mexico look like, which is accessible thanks to its universal themes, but also doesn't lose its national identity.

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