

latest news

Since most EFS members now get **The Notes** by email as an attachment, we thought it was about time to try doing it in full colour instead of the original print-only monochrome, Comments welcome!

Las Acacias

Pablo Giorgelli, Argentina 2011

Script by Pablo Giorgelli and Salvador Roselli
Cinematography by Diego Poleri

Germán de Silva Rubén
Hebe Duarte Jacinta
Nayra Calle Mamani Anahí
Monica Coca Shop assistant
Lili Lopez

Las Acacias is one of those films that gets under your skin; just let it sink in. It has the intimacy and quietness of those French films which reveal an inner life through the smallest of moments and observations. Like all delicacies it is to be savoured slowly. Like the best works of creation, it is simple, deceptively simple. It only has three characters, and one of those (who steals the show) is non-speaking. If you are a fan of modern blockbusters, this is not for you.

This is a Road Movie with a difference: Rubén is a middle-aged truck driver whose job is to deliver logs from the plantations of Asunción in Paraguay to Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, a distance of 900 miles. The film opens with the whirring of



a chain saw over a blank screen, and throughout the film the only sound we have is diegetic, no distracting orchestral accompaniment. On this occasion his boss has asked him to give someone a lift. He is obviously not best pleased at the prospect, even more so when he pulls up at the garage where he is due to meet his passenger, who turns out to be not

only female but carrying a very young baby. The taciturn Rubén (whose human connections have been forged through the giving of gifts) is now forced to spend a couple of days in the cramped cab accompanied by this unknown woman who feels equally embarrassed at the prospect. That's it.

There is no showy cinematography. This is all about beautifully nuanced

performances (Hebe Duarte had been the casting assistant and had never acted before Georgelli asked her to take the part), and perfectly-controlled editing. The confines of the cab mean that neither of them can escape their emotions, which are exposed through minute changes in facial and body language. The tension felt by viewers reflects the tensions between the characters. The director himself is absent from the film; all we learn is through shot-reverse-shot and point-of-view, with an occasional telling use of the mirrors, and almost exclusively in close-up. We are nearly half-way through the film before Rubén and Jacinta make eye contact. Georgelli's favourite film is

Kiarostami's *Close Up*, and this says a lot about him.

This is the director's first film, and his only feature film, and it took him ten years to bring his concept to fruition. The script is minimal, but few films could have spoken so eloquently by saying so little: two of the most delightful utterances are Anahi's yawn and sneeze. Both characters have their back stories, but these are delineated in a couple of sentences:

- *Do you have a family?*
- *No, I have a son.*
- *Who is her father?*
- *She doesn't have a father.*

Georgelli felt a very personal commitment to this film:

"The film is about the loneliness

and alienation of one man – which is what I myself had been through – and the possibility of regeneration, of rebuilding your life anew. It's a positive, hopeful film".

The film was well received on its release, and has continued to gain plaudits ever since. It was awarded the *Caméra d'Or* at Cannes, The *Grand Prix* at Bratislava, the *New Horizon's Prize* at San Sebastián, the *Silver Mirror* at Oslo's *Films from the South Festival*, *Best First Feature* at London Film Festival, and it swept the board at the *Argentinian Film Critics Association Awards*.

"That's what I wanted. To make a film that people liked" Georgelli said. I hope you do.



lot of things happened to me in my life at the same time. Much of it had to do with the situation in Argentina and the economic crisis of 2001. I was out of work for a long time and for me it was very hard. I never imagined something like that would happen to me. It's like seeing someone on the street and you wonder how it is they got there. And you realise that you yourself are not that far away from that. My father got ill, I went through a divorce – all these things happened within a short space of time and I didn't know how to handle it. So when people began to ask me where the story had come from I realised that it was the result of the things that I had been through. The film is about the loneliness and alienation of one man – which is what I myself had been through – and the possibility of regeneration, of rebuilding your life anew. It's a positive, hopeful film.

was interested in was the story of this alienated truck driver and his internal conflict, and the relationship that develops between him and the young woman. So I started to have this idea of being close to them all the time, and it began to seem strange to me to see them from afar. I fell in love with the idea of telling the film from their point of view and showing only the things that they see and not the point of view of the director outside. So that's why there's no music and you see the landscapes through the windscreen of the truck, because that's how they see them. It was like creating a little box that they could breathe in. Inside everything counted, outside it was irrelevant.

I have to admit that in the beginning I was a little scared that the film might be a bit monotonous or claustrophobic but I did a few tests and it worked and I became convinced that this was the way to tell the story.

“ I understand the film took 10 years to make? ”

In reality, the 10 years were part of a personal process of things that were happening to me that ended up becoming tied up with the film. But the film itself took me 5 years to make. I started writing the script in 2005 and finished the post-production just a few months before Cannes.

What happened to me in the time before I started work on the film, became the origins of the film. I had a moment of intense personal crisis: a

There's a moment close to the beginning of the film when Ruben is driving and you can't help asking yourself if you'll be able to watch an entire film that takes place inside a truck, and then the next minute you're completely absorbed in the story. Tell me a little about your decision to set the film inside Ruben's truck.

When I started to think about the setting I wanted I realised that what I

From an interview by Sofia Serbin de Skalon at soundsandcolours.com

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