

# With Miami Dade College, film festival's picture brightened

By MARILYN BOWDEN

The new century brought change to the Miami Film Festival. Each year since 1984, it had presented around 25 of the world's best films over a 10-day span at one venue – for most of that time, at downtown's historic Gusman Center. It earned a loyal audience and the respect of the industry.

What it did not earn was money.

Facing a deficit of \$50,000, the nonprofit Film Society of Miami ceded administrative oversight to Florida International University. Modesto Maidique, then FIU's president, said he felt the festival has become a public institution and could not be allowed to fail.

Under FIU's sponsorship, the number of films shown annually doubled, and the number of venues tripled.

In 2002, the internationally renowned Encuentros (Encounters) Program was unreeled. The program's private, by-invitation-only networking meetings and roundtable discussions gives developers of feature-length film projects from the Ibero-Latin American world a chance to pitch their projects to perhaps get funding or ink a deal.

"We are proud of Miami International Film Festival's track record of support to some of the best Iberoamerican film projects to emerge since 2003," said cur-



**Actor Kevin Kline, college President Eduardo Padrón, festival director Jaie Laplante at a 2012 screening.**

rent festival Executive Director Jaie Laplante.

Perhaps growth was too rapid. In 2003, FIU withdraw its sponsorship, citing the loss of \$20 million in state funding and a deficit of \$800,000 over two years.

Miami Dade College stepped into the breach. Nicole Guillemet, formerly of the Sundance Film Festival, had by then been festival director for a couple of years, and her experi-

ence helped shape the festival as it exists today. The name was officially changed to Miami International Film Festival (MIFF), and juried awards were instituted.

This week, six crowd-pleasers from the 1994-'99 editions will be shown as part of the Countdown Retrospective leading up to MIFF's 30th edition.

Tonight (2/7), from the 1993 archive comes "Suture," an

award-winning tale of murder and identity theft from American directors Scott McGehee and David Siegel.

"Miami Rhapsody," the 1995 romantic comedy by David Frankel set in Miami, airs again on Feb. 8. The program includes a cast reunion billed to include stars Sarah Jessica Parker, Jeremy Piven and Carla Gugino as well as Mr. Frankel. After the screening, the celebrities will attend a

party at The Coral Gables Country Club.

Representing 1996 is Golan Paskaljevic's "Someone Else's America," a tragicomic story of Serb and Spanish immigrants in Brooklyn. This Yugoslav-British-French-German-Greek coproduction will be shown Feb. 9.

Illegal immigrants are also the subject of "La Promesse," a Belgium-France-Luxembourg co-production directed by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne first shown in Miami in 1997 and on this year's calendar for Feb. 10.

"La Promesse" won Best Belgian film at Brussels International Film Festival, Best Foreign Film at Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards and Best Foreign Film from the National Society of Film Critics.

On Feb. 13, Austrian director Michael Haneke's "Funny Games," about a family vacation turned nightmare, will be taking viewers back to 1998.

Finally, on Feb. 13, Wim Wenders' documentary "The Buena Vista Social Club," about a group of extraordinary Cuban musicians brought out of retirements and obscurity, will be featured. The movie won 18 awards and was nominated for an Oscar as Best Documentary Feature.

Details: [miamiretro.festivalgenius.com](http://miamiretro.festivalgenius.com)