

Miami International Film Festival unveils the 2013 lineup

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Gael Garcia Bernal stars in the Oscar-nominated "No," one of the highlights of this year's Miami International Film Festival, which runs March 1-10 at various spots around Miami.

Miami Dade College is blowing out the doors for the 30th anniversary of the Miami International Film Festival, running March 1-10. The school, which presents the annual event, has lined up a whopping 117 feature-length and 12 short films from 41 countries, one of the largest slates in the festival's history.

The celebration will open with *Twenty Feet from Stardom*, a documentary celebrating the unknown backup singers who traditionally cede the spotlight to more famous musicians (including Bruce Springsteen, Sting, Stevie Wonder and Mick Jagger, all of whom appear in the film).

Closing night brings *Venus and Serena*, a film about the tennis champion Williams sisters shot over the course of 2011, when they both struggled with health issues that threatened their sports careers.

Two festival veterans will receive Career Achievement Tributes and attend screenings of their newest films. Fernando Trueba will present *The Artist and the Model* (El artista y la modelo), which earned 12 Goya nominations (Spain's equivalent to the Oscars). And Sweden's Lasse Hallström (*My Life as a Dog*) will attend a showing of the crime thriller *The Hypnotist*.

Other highlights:

- Pablo Larraín's *No*, Chile's first-ever Oscar-nominated film, starring Gael Garcia Bernal as an ad executive who cooks up a campaign to bring down Pinochet in 1988.
- The Australian comedy *Mental* reunites *Muriel's Wedding* director P.J. Hogan and actress Toni Collette, who plays a woman who becomes the nanny of five young girls after their mother has a nervous breakdown.
- Author turned filmmaker Sebastian Junger (*The Perfect Storm*, *Restrepo*) directs *Which Way is the Front Line From Here?*, a documentary on the life and death of photojournalist

Tim Hetherington, who co-directed the Oscar-nominated *Restrepo* and was killed while covering the 2011 Libyan War.

- *Post Tenebras Lux*, the story of a wealthy but dysfunctional family living in the Mexican countryside, which won the Best Director prize last year for Carlos Reygadas at the Cannes Film Festival.
- *Dark Blood*, the thriller River Phoenix was shooting when he died of a drug overdose in 1993. Director George Sluizer (*The Vanishing*) has managed to assemble the existing footage (roughly 80 percent of the movie) into a coherent narrative.
- *Viva Cuba Libre: Rap is War*, director Jesse Acevedo's guerrilla-style documentary about a rap duo whose anti-establishment lyrics are gaining popularity among the island's underground youth culture.
- *The Hunt*, directed by Denmark's Thomas Vinterberg, about a schoolteacher battling to gain custody of his son.

Aside from films, the festival will present several panel discussions and programs. They include a new program called *Miami Future Cinema Critics*, in which a group of seven Miami writers ages 21-30 will blog their way through the festival, and master class seminars with the directors of *Cocaine Cowboys* and *Bonsái*, among others.

Miami Dade College is already celebrating the festival's anniversary with a monthlong retrospective of one film from each of the previous 29 years screening nightly at the Tower Theater in Little Havana. On Feb. 8, for example, Sarah Jessica Parker, Carla Gugino, Jeremy Piven and director David Frankel will attend a screening of *Miami Rhapsody*, which opened the festival in 1995.

"An anniversary year is an opportunity to look at where you've been and where you're going," said Jaie Laplante, executive director of the festival. "We didn't want to create any extra pressure on the event itself, so that's why we came up with the retrospective idea. When this year's festival opens, we've already celebrated the past in some wonderful ways."

For the first time in the festival's history, the event will open and close with documentaries.

"I like to be a director of firsts," Laplante says. " *Chico & Rita* was the first animated film to ever open the festival [in 2011]. These two documentaries were incredibly compelling and lent themselves to gala positioning. They were too big to fit in the regular documentary category. A big part of the 30th anniversary is to keep looking forward and making the event feel fresh."