

Free festival showcases Brazil's best new films

By: Michael Pokalsky

November 13, 2008

The Brazilian Embassy's second annual Brazilian film festival, "Premiere Brazil Washington," starts today at AU's Greenberg Theater and runs through Sunday. This year's lineup features a variety of different programs, including both feature length and short films. In addition to the free screenings, attendees will have the opportunity to meet and speak with some of the actors and directors behind the films.

Some of the films scheduled for the festival include "The Samba Poet" (Noel - Poeta Da Villa), "Fake Blond" (Falsa Loura), "Sign of the City" (O Signo da Cidade), "Enlightened" (Iluminados) and "Castle Ra-Tim-Bum" (Castelo Ra-Tim-Bum). A short film will precede each screened feature.

"The Samba Poet" is the biopic of Noel Rosa, the renowned Brazilian poet and composer. He gained fame by creating "Com que roupa?" a parody of the Brazilian national anthem, and the film chronicles his journey in life from medical student to one of the leading figures in Brazilian popular music. Starring Rafael Raposo as Noel Rosa, "The Samba Poet" opens the festival at 7:30 p.m. Thursday.

Cauã Reymond, featured in Vanity Fair as one of the leading men of Brazilian television, stars in "Fake Blond," a film with a similar connection to Brazilian music. However, instead of a biography, the film is a comedy that details what happens when a young, beautiful industrial worker (actress Rosane Mulholland) falls in love with two different pop stars. The film was helmed by award-winning filmmaker Carlos Reichenbach, whose previous accolades include the 2005 Feature Film Trophy at the National Cinema Festival for "Bens Confiscados" (2004), and the 2000 Cinema Brazil Grand Prize for "Dois Corregos - Verdades Submersas no Tempo" (1999). Paired with the dream-like short "La Dolorosa," "Fake Blond" opens at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

"Sign of the City," starring and written by Brazilian star Bruna Lombardi, is one of the more accessible entries at the festival. A drama in the vein of "Magnolia" and "Short Cuts," "Sign of the City" is centered on an astrologer and radio host who has to juggle her priorities between the show and her sick father. Featuring multiple storylines, the film weaves together these seemingly unrelated plots into a study of the relationships between strangers and the fate that binds them in São Paulo. "Sign of the City" screens 5:30 p.m. Saturday.

In somewhat of a departure from the more adult-oriented fare, "Castle Ra-Tim-Bum" (Castelo Ra-Tim-Bum) is a children's fantasy about a young wizard and his mage family. The film, based on the award-winning Brazilian television series, should be an enjoyable option at the festival for patrons accompanied by children, as well as those still in touch with their inner child. "Castle Ra-Tim-Bum" will not open with a short, and starts at 2 p.m. Sunday.

For those interested in the art of cinema, "Enlightened" is an intriguing option. Cristina Leal's directorial debut studies the careers of some of Brazil's finest cinematographers, including Dib Lutfi, Walter Carvalho and Fernando Duarte. The documentary features a creative experiment that truly shows the importance of cinematography. Each shooting their own version of the same scene, the cinematographers used their individual techniques and visual sensibilities to come up with widely varying products, highlighting the creative process from script to screen. This alone should be enough to attract anyone with a passion for film and cinematography. "Enlightened" starts at 5:30 p.m. Sunday.

The festival is free, seats are available on a first-come, first-served basis. For the full schedule, visit www.brasilemb.org.