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***Boleto al paraíso & Operation Peter Pan: Flying Back to Cuba* won the Havana Star Prize for Best Film & Best Documentary**

***Te extraño, Viaje Redondo, Los colores de la montaña, Robotierra* garnered awards as Best Director, Best Screenplay and Special Jury Mentions**

The Festival was Big Hit at the Box Office

New York, April 16, 2011— At the Closing Night Ceremony on April 15th, 7 pm, at the New York Directors Guild Theatre, ***Ticket to Paradise / Boleto al paraíso*** by Gerardo Chijona (Cuba) won the Havana Star Prize for Best Picture in the Fiction competition, as voted by the jury members: Maria Marta Antin, Irene Blecua and Antonio Tibaldi. ***Operation Peter Pan: Flying Back to Cuba*** (U.S.-Cuba) by Estela Bravo won the Havana Star Prize for Best Documentary, as voted by the jury members: Rodrigo Brandao, Patricio Navia and Greta Schiller. A Special Jury Mention went to *Los colores de la montaña / The Colors of the Mountain* (Colombia-Panama) directed by Carlos Arbelaez.

The Havana Star for Best director went to Fabian Hofman for his film *Te extraño / I Miss You* (Argentina-Mexico); the Best Screenplay prize went Ex Aequo to Marina Stavenhagen and Beatriz Novaro for *Viaje redondo / Round Trip* (Mexico) and Diana Cardozo for *Te extraño / I Miss You* (Argentina-Mexico), the Special Jury Mention went to *Robotierra / Stolen Land* (Colombia) directed by Margarita Martinez and Miguel Salazar.

The festival compiled and exhibited more than 50 films in the fiction and documentary film genres; the total attendance was the largest in the history of the festival.

After careful consideration of the fifteen selected fiction films, the jury concluded: “As jurors, we’ve been able to see filmmakers that are determined to tell their own stories and to define personal styles and aesthetics that made our job all the more interesting and challenging.”

Inspired by true events, ***Boleto al paraíso / Ticket Paradise*** tells the story of Eunice, a teenager running away from her father’s sexual abuse. On the road, she connects with Alejandro, a young boy who escapes to Havana after robbing a pharmacy. Together, they will search for a paradise that will change their lives.

Cuban filmmaker Gerardo Chijona accepted the prize “*I was in this festival in 2000, when it just started; to come back and receive this award it’s an honor for me.*”

On the Documentary competition, ***Operation Peter Pan: Flying Back to Cuba*** directed by Estela Bravo (U.S.-Cuba) won Best Film. The documentary tells the story of more than 14,000 unaccompanied Cuban children who were sent by their parents to the U.S. between 1960 – 62 to save them from the Revolution. Fifty years later, a group of Peter Pans return to Cuba to

make peace with their past. Explaining the decision, the jury concluded: *“We commend the film’s extensive research as well as the filmmaker’s efforts to capture several of these agent’s testimonials before it is too late. We are also happy that the filmmakers allowed for the multiple political views points while also unflinchingly showing the permanent scars of children who were among the many victims of criminal actions and an unjust proxy war.”*

Robatierra / Stolen Land by Margarita Martinez and Miguel Salazar (Colombia) got a Special Jury Mention as *“a well researched, compelling story that takes place over decades, yet is crystalized into a concise 73 minutes. The problem of mono cultures replacing diverse ecosystems exists around the world and threatens not only the Nasa people of Colombia but also the delicate balance of ecosystems around the world,”* in the Jury’s own words.

The other awards went to:

- Best Director, Fabian Hofman for ***Te extraño / I Miss You*** (Argentina-Mexico). The film explores adolescence and the birth of individual identity through Javier, a 15-year-old Argentinean boy.
- Best Screenplay Ex Aequo to Marina Stavenhagen and Beatriz Novaro for ***Viaje Redondo / Round Trip*** (Mexico), Two women who casually meet at the same bus stop are forced by circumstance to spend two nights together in an environment completely unknown to them. And Diana Cardozo for ***Te extraño / I Miss You*** (Argentina-Mexico).
- Special Jury Mention to ***Los colores de la montaña / The Colours of the Mountain*** (Colombia-Panama), directed by Carlos Arbelaez. A group of children in the Colombian countryside try to live their daily lives without trouble despite the war surrounding them. According to the jury: *“For its remarkable cast of children and for not being afraid to show that too often the victims of Colombia’s internal conflict are its most vulnerable and defenseless.”*

A full house enjoyed the Closing Night Ceremony and Awards Presentation, followed by the New York premiere of ***Del amor y otros demonios (Of Love and Other Demons)***. The film based on a García Márquez novel has won awards around the world.

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The Havana Film Festival New York is a project of American Friends of the Ludwig Foundation of Cuba (AFLFC), a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization building cultural bridges between the U.S. and Cuba through programs in the arts. *“Since 2000, we have been working towards that end. As a partner of ¡Sí Cuba! we are definitely doing that,”* explains Carole Rosenberg, Executive Director of HFFNY and President of AFLFC.

For more information on Havana Film Festival New York visit www.HFFNY.com

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