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TORONTO INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL 2016



DONOSTIA ZINEMALDIA
FESTIVAL DE SAN SEBASTIAN
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

X500

A FILM BY JUAN ANDRÉS ARANGO

JEMIE ALMAZAN

BERNARDO GARNICA CRUZ

JONATHAN DIAZ ANGULO

MONUMENT
FILMS

PERIPHERIA



M&C
FILMS

Filmoption
International

SYNOPSIS

X500

A FILM BY JUAN ANDRÉS ARANGO



Thousands of kilometers apart, three young migrants undergo mental, emotional, and physical transformations in order to survive the violence of their new worlds.

After the death of her mother, Maria arrives in Montreal from the Philippines to live with her grandmother. She cannot relate to her new life and to her grandmother's dream. She finds herself alienated and isolated, both at home and at school until she befriends a Filipino cholo gang. Searching for meaning, she transforms into a chola, a Latina gangsta, hoping to find a sense of purpose in a world where she doesn't belong. Alex, a 19-year-old Colombian, has returned to Buenaventura after being deported from the US. He carries with him the secret of his brother's death. Alex tries to restart his life as a fisherman and support his family, but his return catches the interest of a local gang. To survive and to protect his youngest brother, Alex decides to join them. David, a 16-year-old Mazahua native, leaves his indigenous village for Mexico City after his father's death. He finds a job on a construction site and starts befriending a punk community that will help him find his true identity. This second feature by Juan Andrés Arango (*La Playa DC*) follows these three teenagers living in different areas of the Americas yet going through the same experience of grief, migration and transformation.

WITH JEMBLE ALMAZAN, BERNARDO GARNICA CRUZ,

JONATHAN

PRODUCTION LO.

Périphéria, Montreal

Septima Films, Colombia

Machete Producciones, Mexico

X500 is produced by Yanick Létourneau from Montreal-based Periphéria (Canada), Jorge Botero from Septima Films (Colombia) and Edher Campos & Luis Salinas from Machete (Mexico). Yanick Létourneau has recently produced the feature documentary *Gulistan, Land of Roses* (2016). Jorge Botero was the main producer on Juan Andres Arango's first feature film, *La Playa D.C.* and Edher Campos and Luis Salinas produced *Leap Year - Camera d'Or* in 2010 and *La Jaula de Oro* in 2013. *X500* is their first collaboration.

FORMAT : DCP

DURATION : 108 MINUTES

RATIO : 4:3

SOUND : 5.1 SURROUND

LANGUAGE : ORIGINAL VERSION WITH SUBTITLES

PRODUCED BY YANICK LÉTOURNEAU JORGE ANDRÉS BOTERO EDHER CAMPOS LUIS SALINAS

FILMOPTION PRESENTS A PÉRIPHÉRIA, SEPTIMA FILMS, MACHETE PRODUCTION WITH JEMBLE ALMAZAN JONATHAN DIAZ ANGULO BERNARDO GARNICA CRUZ DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY NICOLAS CANNICIONI VINCENT BIRON
ART DIRECTORS LAURA NHEM JUAN DAVID BERNAL CLAUDIO CONTRERAS FIRST ASSISTANT DIRECTORS MICHEL MARREC JULIAN LAGUNA MATIAS ESTÉVEZ SOUND RENÉ PORTILLO ISABEL TORRES DANIEL GARCÍA
SOUND DESIGNER CHRISTIAN RIVEST CASTING JUNNA CHIF ANDRÉS BARRIENTOS ANA ÁLVAREZ EDITOR FELIPE GUERRERO MUSIC SUPERVISORS PAULINA MÁRQUEZ NANCY MARCOTTE WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JUAN ANDRÉS ARANGO



DIRECTOR'S NOTE



X500 allowed me to look deeper into my exploration of the teenage identity crisis in a context of migration. I set 3 stories in 3 different cities in the American continent, three cities I've built strong connection with. I was myself an immigrant in Mexico and Montreal and what I learned there made me who I am today. I chose to set the third story in Buenaventura, Colombia; a city that I discovered while researching for my first film, *La Playa D.C.*, that still fascinates me to this day. Buenaventura is Colombia's biggest port. It's also one of the most dangerous places in South America, home to a fascinating afro-Colombian community that has lived on the fringes of society since slavery despite its obvious influence on Colombian culture and music.

Throughout the film, the three characters' stories are entangled and echo one another, linked by common themes: migration and transformation. The narrative structure of the film is like a tree: the branches are the stories linked by a common trunk.

The transition from childhood to adulthood is a key moment where appearances and belonging sometimes takes great importance. It's that time when one creates and builds his own identity, a metamorphosis that becomes even more complex when it happens in a context of uprooting. Just like my character, I left home when I was 15 to live abroad and by the age of 18 I had already lived defining experiences. My experience ignited my fascination for that period of life.

Being from various cultures (Canadian and Colombian), I wanted to explore those archetypes in popular culture as well as their variation in different geographical contexts, whether we are in the North or the South. In *X500*, the figures of the cholo, the gangster and the punk all have different connotations depending on the country, and whether we are looking at them from the Bajamar neighbourhood in Buenaventura, or Mexico central market or the Côte-des-Neiges neighbourhood in Montreal. Each character adopts these figures and transforms them, David, the young Mazahua from Mexico, becomes a punk pogoing to Colombian cumbia in Mexico city; Maria who lives in Montreal becomes a chola (a Mexican gang girl) to erase her Filipino identity; Alex, the young afro-Colombian from Buenaventura transform into a gangster to survive in a hostile and violent environment.

La Playa D.C., where young Afro-Colombians were dreaming of a better life in the US, was already questioning the idea of urbanity and cultural melting pot. *X500* follows the exploration of those themes but with more ambition and complexity, both in substance and in form. I don't aspire to perfection: I look for truth in cinema, to be true to places, characters and emotions.

My creative process is deeply inspired by the shooting locations themselves. While writing the script I lived in Buenaventura, Montreal and Mexico to immerse myself in the atmosphere. I met with the people and wrote my characters based on their stories. I also lean on the actors' personal lines for inspiration.

Casting started at the very beginning of my research, and I created preliminary group of non professional actors who came from the same social background as my characters. I rehearsed and improvised with them drawing inspiration from the scenes that they were acting. I pulled many details from these exercise that was very helpful when writing dialogue. Each actor brought his or her own details and personal experience.

I want my film to be passionate and powerful, rough at times, something that transcends the cinematographic experience. I want to create moments of truth where the characters and the locations come alive. I want every element of the film; stories, image, sound, acting, rhythm to come together so that the audience can identify with the characters and their emotional journey. Rather than a formal cinematographic experience, I want *X500* to be a sensory, moving, immersive and unsettling experience.

JUAN ANDRÈS ARANGO

JUAN ANDRÉS ARANGO

Juan Andrés Arango is a Colombian-Canadian director, screenwriter and director of photography. He has worked as a screenwriter and director in his native Colombia as well as in Canada, where he travelled after attending Concordia University's Exchange Program during his studies at the Film and Television School of the *Universidad Nacional de Colombia*. In 2003, he started his master studies in Cinematography at the University of Barcelona (ESCAC) and went on to practice his craft in Amsterdam. During this period he began working on his first feature film *La Playa DC*, winning several awards including the Colombian Film Development Fund's Fiction Feature Screenplay Development grant, and post-production grants from *Fond Sud Cinéma* and the Huber Bals Fund. The film had its world premiere at *Un Certain Regard* in Cannes, in 2012. It has since played in more than 80 festivals around the world and has won several awards. It was selected to represent Colombia at the Oscars in 2014. *X500* is his second Feature.

FILMOGRAPHY

2016 - *X500*

2012 - *La Playa D.C.*

2011 - *Acá no hay muelle* (*Here there are no docks*) (short)

2009 - 2010 *Portrait d'immigrants* (*Portraits of immigrants*) (tv series)

2008 - *Comment apprendre à dire "bonjour" en 10 étapes* (short)

2005 - *Los Vega y Dos Fandangos* (documentary)

2003 - *Eloisa y las Nieves* (short)

PRIZES AND DISTINCTIONS

La Playa D.C. – Official Selection Cannes Film festival 2012 in *Un Certain Regard* section, Best Director Prize at the Santiago International Film Festival, Best First Film at the Lima International Film Festival, Lions Film Award at Rotterdam, Work in Progress Prize at the Valdivia International Film Festival, Fonds Sud Cinéma for Postproduction by the French Government, Hubert Bals Fund from Rotterdam, Opening Film at Milan International Film Festival, Opening Film Festival de Film Latino de Biarritz, Ibermedia Fund, Ibermedia Fund for Scenario, Fond Proimágenes (production and development) Ministerio de la Cultura de Colombia.

Comment apprendre à dire "bonjour" en 10 étapes – Public Choice Award at Festival de court-métrages de Lausanne, Suisse. Official Selection at the Montreal Festival des films du monde, Vues d'Afrique Film Festival and Festival du film québécois in Algeria, International Haitian Film Festival (Opening Film).



JEMBIE ALMAZAN



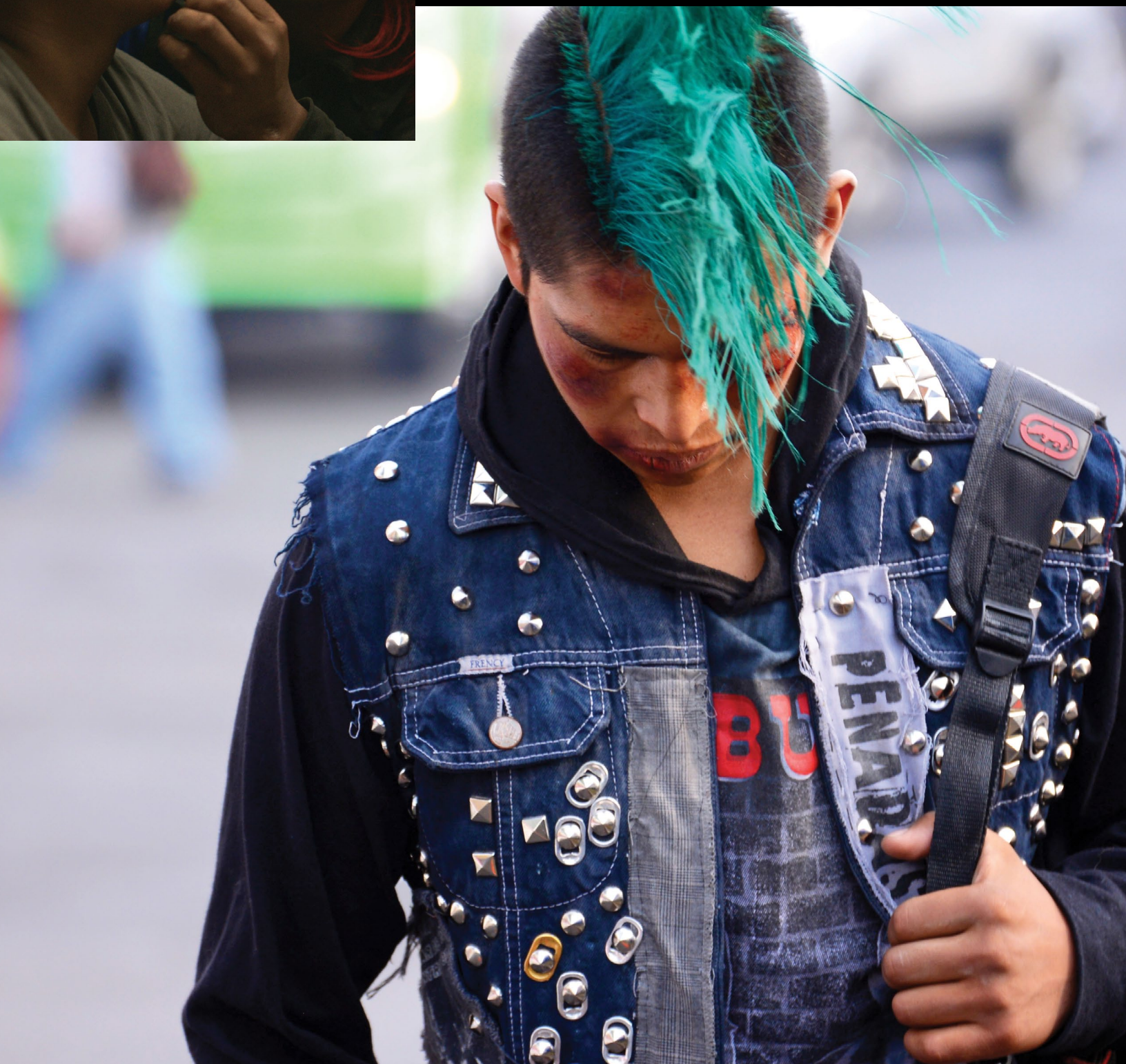
A young Filipino-Canadian, Jembie Almazan arrived in Canada in 2008 and now lives in Montreal. She is currently studying Health Science at Dawson College and is planning to study Medicine in University. She had no experience as an actor but was perfect for one of the leading roles in Juan Andrés Arango's *X500*, in 2016.



BERNARDO GARNICA CRUZ



Bernardo is from San José del Rincón, a rural community in the State of Mexico. He is a teenager who moved to Mexico City looking for new opportunities. Bernardo works in construction and is specialized in manipulating metal. He also assists Mexican sculptor José Rivelino Moreno Valle in his projects. X500 was his first acting experience. He was chosen amongst 40 young indigenous Punks to be the main character in the Mexican episode.



JONATHAN DIAZ ANGULO



Jonathan Diaz Angulo was born in 1998 in Buenaventura, Colombia, where he still lives with his family. He is currently attending High School and he dreams of becoming an electronic engineer. *X500* was his first acting experience; it was his way to talk about his hometown.



X500

DISTRIBUTION (CANADA)

FILMOPTION INTERNATIONAL

3401 St. Antoine West

Montreal, Quebec

H3Z 1X1

Phone: 514.931.6180 x2657

Fax: 514.939.2034

anoble@filmoption.com

www.filmoption.com

MEDIA RELATIONS

Touchwood PR (for TIFF)

Daniel French

Phone: 416.593.0777 x 205

daniel@touchwoodpr.com

XION Communications

Phone: 514.495.8176

info@ixioncommunications.com

INTERNATIONAL SALES

Visit Films

173 Richardson St.

Brooklyn, NY, 11222

+1 718.312.8210

info@visitfilms.com

www.visitfilms.com



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