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### Film/Video Filmmakers Bryan Lorenzo and Jose Luis Martinez on *Nochebuena*

By Arielle Castillo Tue., Jul. 19 2011 at 10:00 AM Comments (3)  
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When Bryan Lorenzo graduated from the University of Miami film program, he already had his next project in mind. As a transplant from Maryland, Lorenzo, though half-Dominican, had initially felt like a gringo fish out of water in Miami's multi-culti seas. That was a feeling only amplified when he started dating a through-and-through Miami Cuban-American -- and, of course, dealing with all the extended-family expectations that go along with that.



So for his first post-school project, he eventually decided to tackle all those feelings through a short film set around the most epic Cuban-American celebration of all: nochebuena, which was also to serve as the film's title. And he turned to the Miami World Cinema Center's Jose Luis Martinez for help.

The center is meant to serve as a resource center for aspiring indie filmmakers in Miami, and, inspired by the project, Martinez decided to take on the role as its executive producer, pro bono. Together, he and Lorenzo developed the *Nochebuena* script to its current, shoot-ready form. The plot centers around an 18-year-old Cuban-American, Margarita, bringing home her 26-year-old boyfriend, Andrew, to nochebuena for the first time.

Not only is the boyfriend Anglo, but -- horror of horrors -- they're going to be moving in together. So how will the family's patriarch, Ruben, and the assorted abuelitas, tias, and primos y primas react? Good old Caribbean-style Catholic guilt, cross-cultural mix-ups, and other hijinks ensue, naturally.

To get the film off the ground, Martinez and Lorenzo also decided to turn to the Internet for a very 2011 solution to producing, and the two mounted a fundraising campaign on the web site Indiegogo. They quickly met their modest fundraising goal of \$2,500, but estimate they will need a total of \$10,000 to finish the project, which will begin shooting in August. As such, they're continuing with the online fundraising campaign through its intended original end date, July 25. Production begins just a week and a half later, on August 4.

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Cultist reached both Martinez and Lorenzo by phone recently to chat about the Miami World Cinema Center, the fundraising campaign, and of course, the idea behind the film itself. Read what they had to say below, and if it inspires you to support the film, [visit the Nochebuena campaign on Indiegogo](#).

*New Times: What exactly is the Miami World Cinema Center?*

*Martinez:* I lived and worked in L.A. for about four years, and then moved back permanently to Miami, and now I'm the creative director of the center, which is the city's first nonprofit film studio. We're basically a support system for local independent cinema, for filmmakers who want to tell stories about our community. That can take on many forms -- we have everything from educational programs to workshops to lectures, and we can also come on board as producers on film projects we feel passionately about supporting.

*How did you and Bryan meet?*

*Martinez:* I believe Bryan found out about us through the motion pictures program at the University of Miami, from which he graduated last year. He gave me a call and shot me an e-mail, and from the outset I really responded to the project, because I thought it really fit our mission of telling a story very local and specific to Miami.

So we met to talk about the script, which, at the time, was really good, but was missing that authentic Cuban flavor. The script is now going to be bilingual, so it's almost like a throwback to *Que Pasa, U.S.A.?* with a modern twist.

The original draft was mainly in English, and the main story is this sort of Anglo-American who's thrown into this situation of experiencing this Cuban celebration for the first time. It's sort of the point of view that Bryan was bringing to the story, and he nailed that part of the story. But then when it came to the ensemble cast, these are real spit-fire characters where half the time they're going back and forth in English, and the other half in Spanish.

*Bryan Lorenzo:* If I were to describe it myself I'd say it's a very universal story, but in a very specific setting. I came in with the universal story, which is a parent learning how to trust their child's choices in life, and then again, like Jose was saying, he came in afterwards and layered it. We've been layering it ever since.

*Martinez:* One of the things the center believes in very strongly is script development. Before we begin anything else like pre-production and casting locations, if the script isn't well-developed, there's no point going to those next stages. So with Bryan's script and every other script we bring in, we work so it's ready for pre-production.

*Lorenzo:* To add to that, I came in to the center as just a guy with a script. Now we've come so far from that, and the Miami World Cinema Center's been the guiding force along the way.

*Bryan, what gave you the idea to center the script around this holiday, specifically?*

Well, I'm from Maryland, and I'm half Dominican and half American, so being biracial gave me this experience already of culture clashes. My mom and my dad are so different, and they're separated, so I'd grow up with these very different experiences. But when I wrote this script, I did have the idea in mind to make it around this holiday, because my girlfriend's Cuban, and through her, I discovered this holiday and the setting.

*Had you celebrated nochebuena with a big Cuban family?*

*Lorenzo:* Yes I did. In fact, I did the world tour of nochebuenas, doing three in one night to get different perspectives. I took Jose's advice to go in there to do research, and I went to a pig farm myself and picked out the pig, which is something my main character goes through. The stakes are raised around nochebuena, because you've got the entire family gathering for this holiday. So for me as a filmmaker, it seemed like the best time to set it.

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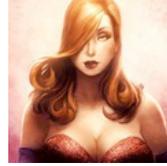
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