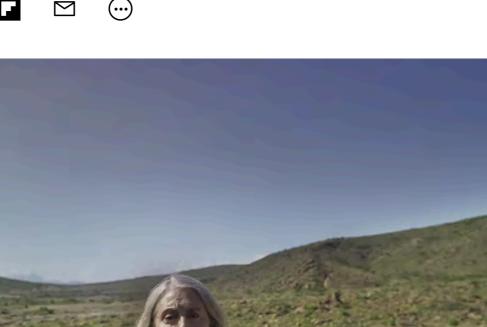
VARIETY

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Voice

By John Hopewell ~



Courtesy of San Sebastian Film Festival

Eight of the 10 directors in the Morelia Festival's main Mexican competition are women, led by two of the biggest Mexican fest hits of the year, "Robe of Gems," Natalia López Gallardo's Berlin Special Jury laureate, and "Huesera," from Michelle Garza Cervera, a double Tribeca winner.

Features with Indigenous or Black Mexican protagonists have shot up in Mexico, from 14 in 2019 to 31 in 2019, according to Imcine's Mexican Cinema Yearbook.

In 2017, Mexico's biggest homegrown hit was Nicolas López's "Do It Like an Hombre," a merciless taunt of a Mexican macho's helpless homophobia, which grossed \$11.0 million in the country. **Related Stories**



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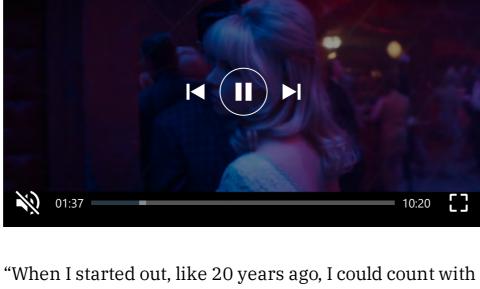


film terms, the dial is finally moving on diversity. ADVERTISEMENT

For centuries an entrenched bastion of machismo, in

Sebastián.

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my fingers the female directors I knew in Mexico; and

director of 2017's Morelia Audience Award winner "The

Rosario Castellanos, and now the Netflix-backed "Noise"

Eternal Feminine," a portrait of major Mexican writer

("Ruido"), which world premieres at this week's San

today, there are almost 100," says Natalia Beristáin,

"The push for diversity is "starting, it's definitely something that as a filmmaker I sense every more and more," Beristáin adds. "When I was growing up, you could catch LGBTQ films by

there wee very few films, you had to watch them almost hiding and then wait months for the next LGBTQ movie to be released," remembers Bruno Santamaría, a Gold Hugo best doc winner at the 2020 Chicago Festival for "Things We Dare Not Do." Now, in contrast, a significant percentage of Mexican movies explore sexual identity, he adds.

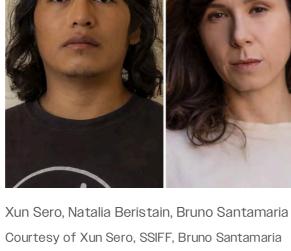
Jaime Humberto Hermosillo and Julián Hernandez, but

Why is another matter.

Diversity is "definitely on the agenda of Imcine," says

Beristáin, says of the Mexican Film Institute, noting it "is trying to push funds to the people that they didn't

usually get them."





The Imcine-backed ECAMC has financed over 50 productions. Imcine's new Foprocine fund boasts bonus incentive points to films directed by women or titles

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from community, Indigenous and Black filmmakers.

"The government wants to create a sense of Mexico

But any opening must also be traced back to a years-

such as to a public health system. "Cinema's now

opening up to its LGBTQ population," says Santamaría.

long battle waged by Mexico's working classes for rights,

benefitting from that struggle." Films being made, by female, queer, Indigenous or other formerly underrepresented groups are also among the most exciting of the year, judged by the festival hardware they're collecting. Morelia's competition

Special jury laureate, and "Huesera," from Michelle Garza Cervera, a double Tribeca winner. "Women directors are walking a path first traced by prior generations," says Beristaín. Many titles also grapple with Mexico's hearts of darkness, such as the wholesale slaughter of young

features "Robe of Gems," Natalia López Gallardo's Berlin

Docs and Guadalajara, sees himself on a mission, breaking down barriers. "For me cinema is a political act. I want to take films and filmmakers to places where nobody thought we'd get, to say to those who have grown

up in the same situation that we can also achieve this."

A sense of involvement, and of urgency to films which

women, across all social classes, who suddenly go

missing. Xun Sero, director of "Mom," which played Hot

"What I think is really important is that I do believe that we're looking for different narratives. We haven't been part of the status quo in a way and – I'm talking about myself – I just want to be part of something else," says

Beristáin. Her "Noise" weaves near documentary

push diversity is almost inevitable.

There's also the question of originality.

elements – a San Luis Potosí abduction fiction search party made up of its real life members – and dream-like sequences, capturing Julia's sense of rage, impotence and some kind of hope. Likewise, Xun Sero sees "Mom" as cliché busting. "The image of Indigenous people for many years have been of pain, sadness, suffering." He adds: "Women suffer from machista violence, yes.

"recognizes the diversity of people on this planet." The best of Mexico's community, Indigenous or Black Mexican movies are, moreover, no anthropological snore fests, but sophisticated and entertaining works of

art.

But it's experienced in different ways and my mother

had the strength to rise above her circumstances like

other women all over the world." In this sense, the film

voice over, Sero deftly delays a full reveal of his mother's achievement, and how she got there, plus the collateral damage: His memory of childhood, he confesses in the film, is of his brother and him being left alone as his mother looked for work. "They Made Its the Night" lifts off scene-setting, with a

In "Mom," working through filmed conversations

between the filmmaker and his mum and narrative

multi-layered soundtrack and energetic editing, even in the most banal of settings, – a farmyard scene for instance – proving a sensual delight. ADVERTISEMENT

Spirited doc feature "Negra" turns on what it means to

upper-class protagonist asking a street vendor if there

any Black people in Mexico. "Down on the Costa Chica,"

he replies, diplomatically – but his diplomacy is a form

be Black in Mexico today. It kicks off with the Black

of racism, declining to point out that his questioner is Black herself. In "Huesera," Michelle Garza Cervera subverts one of the basic tenets of genre to telling effect, underscoring that the real horror for the protagonist, a married mother-to-be, lies elsewhere.

directed by women spiked 50% in 2021 to a remarkable 66, 50% up on the 2017-19 average. That figure, however, still represents just 25% of the 256 Mexican movies classified last year, driven by a slew of debuts and docs.

Sero resists calling his film "Indigenous." "It's Tzotzil.

Cinema for me is a tool which helps me in our native

peoples' struggle for recognition of their roots and

Mexico still has a lot of ground to make up. Features

richness of their cultures, which is my case are Mayan Tzotzil." The latest Pride march was the biggest in history, emblazoned by marketing from big corporate brands supported by the government, Yet, "there wasn't one call for justice after the murder of trans victims just a few weeks before, or demands for more [subsidized]

antiretroviral medicines," Santamaría recalls. "There's an opportunity to make films which impact the broadest of audiences, but total inclusion has yet to happen," he

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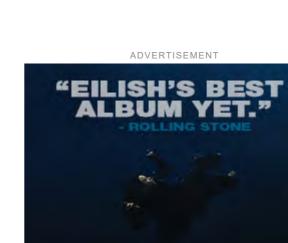


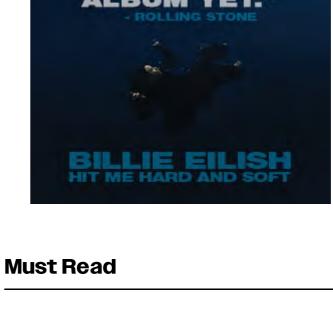
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