



fish

Living is Easy with Eyes Closed
(Spain 2014)

DIRECTOR : David Trueba
RUNNING TIME : 108mins
RATING : M

Synopsis:

Set in Franco-era Spain, a free-spirited English teacher sets out to meet his idol John Lennon, who is filming on the other side of the country. Antonio wants to understand the lyric to the newly released Norwegian Wood.

Review: Philippa Hawker

Spanish filmmaker David Trueba came across the subject matter for his new film quite by accident. It wasn't just the tale of John Lennon's 1966 Spanish sojourn that intrigued him. It was the account of a teacher of English with a Beatles obsession who was determined to meet Lennon and ask him about his lyrics – lyrics that he used as a teaching aid in the classroom.

Trueba read about this man in 2006, when the town of Almeria was celebrating the 40th anniversary of Lennon's presence; he had come there to take an acting role in a satirical comedy with director Richard Lester called *How I Won The War*. The other significant element in the project was a personal one.

The novelist and filmmaker is the youngest of eight brothers; at the time Lennon was in Spain, Trueba's second brother was locked in a struggle with his father about the length of his hair. "He was trying to get his hair long, because he was a crazy fan of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. And my father was a typical Spanish father of the time of Franco, very authoritarian. So he told him to cut his hair. And one day my brother left home because of that."

To the figure of Antonio, the teacher (Javier Camara), Trueba adds a teenage boy, Juanjo (Francesc Colomer), who has run away after a haircut showdown. And there's a pregnant girl, Belen (Natalia de Molina), who has hit the road, wanting to make her own decisions about the future. The three embark on a trip together: it's a voyage of discovery for them all, a delicately observed, tender and poignant story.

Cont.

FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

10.00 am Sunday 14th February 2016

8.15 pm Tuesday 16th February 2016

Review: Cont.

Living Is Easy With Eyes Closed begins with a demonstration of the teacher's technique, as he uses the lyrics of *Help* to teach his students English – one after another, the kids speak a line from the song, with a passionate enthusiasm. It was a pleasure to shoot the scene, Trueba says, but it took him a long time to cast. Even for brief appearances, he wanted performers who had the look and feel of the time. "Faces are the most important landscape of a film," he says. "Often, when I see period pieces now, I have the feeling they have paid a lot of attention to the details of decoration and costume, but they use faces and behaviours that are contemporary." He also believes that makers of period films frequently adopt a cynical attitude towards their characters, a position of moral superiority towards the past. That's something he definitely didn't want in this film, or in its three leads. He sought authenticity in their performances and their backgrounds.

The young actors are both kids from small villages, he says. And Camara, an Almodovar regular who's a familiar face in Spanish cinema, "actually comes from a village in the north, and he maintains the spirit of a person who is not very urbanised. He's not a very psychological kind of actor, he's more naturalistic, and that reminds me of the best actors in Spain in the '50s and '60s. That's why I put him in the movie."

Living Is Easy With Eyes Closed takes its title from a phrase from *Strawberry Fields Forever*, a song that marked a new direction for Lennon. It's a recollection of childhood and pain and places in his past, and, he revealed in an interview in the 1970s, he wrote it while he was in Spain, feeling isolated and uncertain, and unsure of his future with the Beatles.

"That song became very important for me," Trueba says. "I didn't want to make the film about John Lennon, or make him an important presence in the film, but I wanted him to be a moral presence. And in that way *Strawberry Fields Forever* was important too."

Source : <http://www.smh.com.au> Philippa Hawker 23/10/2014 accessed 22/4/2015

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COMING UP:

March	<i>Wild Tales</i> (Argentina)	Sunday 13 th & Tuesday 15 th
May	<i>Marshlands</i> (Spain)	Sunday 1 st & Tuesday 3 rd
May	<i>The Mafia Only Kills In Summer</i> (Italy)	Sunday 29 th & Tuesday 31 st
June	<i>Far From Men</i> (France)	Sunday 26 th & Tuesday 28 th

Some Thoughts On: *We Are the Nobles*

I enjoyed this Mexican comedy, but not quite as much as I thought I would. I found it more amusing than outright funny. This was mainly due to a screenplay that I felt was almost done by the numbers ~ you could see where it was going, and how it would end up, pretty clearly after the first 15 to 20 minutes. That, and the characterisations by the spoilt offspring who so understandably exasperated their hard working father, in roles that were a little too clichéd, with performances too exaggerated for me.

Having said that, it was well shot with excellent production values and provided the light-hearted fun for which it was selected in the first place. We generally choose a less serious film for December in keeping with the holiday/festive season spirit. Despite it obviously not being deep and meaningful, there were still many positive life lessons featured, again showing how we tend to have more in common with other cultures than we often suppose. Enormously popular in Mexico where the vast majority of people, who are the 'have nots', really enjoyed seeing a film having a well-aimed shot at the superficial personalities and excessive, shallow lifestyles of the 'haves'. It seemed to be well received at both of our screenings showing there is a place for cinema-lite too!

The real highlight though was the Empire's 100th Birthday Compilation featurette which received a round of applause at both screenings!! **Ross Armfield.**

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Contemporary Spanish Cinema:

In recent years, Spanish cinema has achieved important international recognition. The great filmmaker Luis Buñuel was the first to achieve universal acclaim, followed by Pedro Almodóvar in the 1980s. Directors like Segundo de Chomón, Florián Rey, Luis García Berlanga, Juan Antonio Bardem, Carlos Saura, Julio Médem and Alejandro Amenábar have also achieved success. Non-directors such as Cinematographer Néstor Almendros, the Art Director Gil Parrondo, the Screenwriter Rafael Azcona are less well known, but actors such as Maribel Verdú, Penélope Cruz, Francisco Rabal, Antonio Banderas, Javier Bardem and Fernando Fernán Gómez have obtained significant recognition outside Spain.

Today, only 10-20% of box office receipts in Spain are generated by domestic films, a situation common to many countries. Consequently the Spanish government has implemented various measures aimed at supporting local film production and movie theatres, which include the assurance of funding from the main national television stations. The trend is being reversed with the recent screening of productions such as the €30 million film *Alatriste* (starring Viggo Mortensen), the Academy Award winning Spanish film *Pan's Labyrinth* (starring Maribel Verdú), *Volver* (starring Penélope Cruz and Carmen Maura), and *Los Borgia* (starring Paz Vega), all of which were sold-out blockbusters in Spain.

Another generally unacknowledged aspect of Spanish cinema is the number of successful English-language films such as; *Agora* (directed by Alejandro Amenábar and starring Rachel Weisz), *Ché* (directed by Steven Soderbergh and starring Benicio del Toro), *The Machinist* (starring Christian Bale), *The Others* (starring Nicole Kidman), and Miloš Forman's *Goya's Ghosts* (starring Javier Bardem and Natalie Portman) and the *The Impossible* (starring Ewan McGregor and Naomi Watts), that have all been produced by Spanish companies.

Message from the President

Happy New Year everyone!! A special welcome to any new members who are joining us for our half season of films from February to June inclusive. Thank you for getting on board, we hope you enjoy the ride. It promises to be a great mix of films ahead of us.

I can't believe the committee are just about to start selecting the first seven films of our NEXT season which will take us through to this time next year. No wonder the years seem to fly so quickly!

I would like to thank the Empire Cinema for allowing us to show their special 100th birthday featurette prior to both our December screenings. This compilation of film clips spanning 100 years accompanied by a moving soundtrack was put together by David Graham at the Empire. It was just delightful, bringing back so many cinematic memories of films and times gone by. From Charlie Chaplin and the silent era through the coming of sound and colour right up to the present day ~ with a generous sprinkling of Australian films too ~ it was a reminder of how loved and how culturally important this wonderful form of storytelling has been, and still is. Despite all the competing technologies, (from TV in the 1950's right up to Netflix now), cinema is the great survivor. Not only surviving, but thriving!! There is a chance of another film, (a short documentary), being paired with one of shorter duration FISH films later in this season. More details down the track.

So it's up and away for 2016 with our second of four Spanish speaking films in a row. We were in Mexico in December, Spain this month, Argentina next month and then Spain again after that. Another FISH first I believe! *Living Is Easy With Eyes Closed* promises to be a real quirky, FISHy outing ~ the ideal way to kick off the new year ahead. I look forward to seeing it and you at the Empire soon.

Yours in Film,

Ross Armfield.



FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC

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