

Muylaert's film on maid's life gets Brazil talking

RIO DE JANEIRO, Sept. 23. (AFP): A Brazilian film about a maid in a wealthy home is not only making waves as Brazil's Oscars entry, but stirring painful debate over inequality and racism in a country in crisis.

"Que Horas Ela Volta?," released in English as "The Second Mother," is a long way from the violence-filled depictions of drug gangs, like "City of God," that foreigners have come to expect from Brazil.

But director Anna Muylaert's outwardly quiet movie has hit a raw spot in using a live-in maid's story to bare the hypocrisy behind the idyllic facade of the upper class household where she works.

Released at a time when Brazil is reeling from economic decline, corruption and the crumbling of President Dilma Rousseff's leftist agenda, the film whose title translates as "What Time Will She Come Home?" challenges the biggest country in Latin America to examine its soul.

The film "has all the chances of becoming a milestone in contem-

porary Brazilian cinema, as 'Central do Brasil' and 'City of ...' were in other contexts. It's a film completely in sync with the pulse of the country," critic and blogger Jose Geraldo Couto wrote.

Actress Regina Case has won rave reviews at home and in Hollywood for her portrayal of Val, one of Brazil's largely invisible army of domestic workers.

Living in the tiny servant's room of a luxurious Sao Paulo house, Val not only feeds the family and cleans, but looks after the dog, garden, swimming pool and all but raises the sweet, but spoiled son.

Reality

Her employers say she's "practically family." But the film ruthlessly shows how Val in reality is second class and will remain so until — inspired by her estranged daughter's independence — she quits and starts a new life of her own.

For Carli Maria dos Santos, a veteran maid who is now president of the Rio de Janeiro

Domestic Workers' Union, that story of social upheaval captures real trends.

"I thought the film was very good, especially the end where the servant finally frees herself and goes off," dos Santos said in an interview. "Things are changing."

There are just over six million domestic workers in Brazil, according to government figures.

By comparison, UN and labor union estimates show the United States, with a population a third bigger than Brazil's, has only 1.8 to 2.6 million domestic workers. The European Union, with more than double Brazil's population, has an estimated 2.5 million such workers, according to the International Labor Organization.

Servants in Brazil — most of them black women — are so woven into the social fabric that architects design even middle-class apartments with a designated bedroom for the live-in help.

These jobs can be a chance to escape extreme poverty in the outlying regions of the world's seventh biggest economy. But to critics, the domestic service industry also holds back society, reinforcing racism and other legacies of slavery which flourished in Brazil right up to 1888 — two decades later than in the United States.

Dos Santos, who is 62 and started working at 10, said her experience has been bitter-sweet. "When you're with a family that is educated and good, you benefit too — it's like going to a school. It has a good side," she said.

But maids embedded in rich families, housed in "the very small room with no window," have constantly to remind themselves that the "beautiful house, the swimming pool, the sauna — that is not their reality," she said.

Under Workers' Party president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his successor Rousseff, tens of millions of people have been lifted from poverty in the last decade. And in 2013 constitutional changes finally extended normal rights, like overtime and the minimum wage, to domestic workers.

Given those seismic shifts, some Brazilians wonder how long it will be before the country's long-suffering maids follow fictional Val out the door.

"It's already over," said Francisca Ciambarelli, who was among the well-heeled crowd watching "Que Horas Ela Volta?" in Rio's swanky Leblon neighborhood.

Ciambarelli, a 45-year-old economist, said she has a devoted live-in maid, but that the system is on its last legs. "People don't want to live like that anymore."

Just like in the film, Ciambarelli's maid has a child in the process of getting a higher education and moving into another social class where working as a servant would be unthinkable.

"The mother will not change. She will live in our house and die there," Ciambarelli said. "But the son, he is always trying to persuade her to leave."

Dos Santos said eventually the new laws "will change a great deal" in Brazil. "We will end up like France where people are paid

by the hour and this working 24 hours a day will end."

But Brazil's economic crisis may yet rewrite that script.

The number of people in domestic service fell steadily from around 2008, when the Workers' Party welfare program was at its most effective. However, this year, with recession eating away at economic opportunity, the numbers have started to climb again.

With salaries for live-in maids in the wealthy parts of Rio de Janeiro reaching around \$500 a month, even women from the new generation might think twice about rejecting the opportunity.

The really poor, meanwhile, are unlikely even to see "Que Horas Ela Volta?"

Cinema tickets in Brazil typically cost between 30 and 40 reais (approximately \$7 to \$10). The minimum hourly wage is just 3.58 reais (90 cents).

"That's the reality. I saw the film because I was in a seminar," dos Santos said. "Otherwise, I wouldn't have gone."

Film

Variety



This photo shows a scene from 'The Intern' starring Anne Hathaway, Robert De Niro is now showing in Kuwait cinemas.

Film

Winehouse docu to be lesson for Thai delinquents

'Urban Hymn' inspirational youth drama

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 23, (Agencies): Competent if pedestrian "Urban Hymn" takes a familiar walk down the path of inspirational youth drama. There are no surprises on hand in this fictive tale with Shirley Henderson as a middle-class Londoner who tries to mentor a teenage girl with a rough background and likely rougher future. Handled with assurance if no great inspiration by veteran helmer Michael Caton-Jones ("Rob Roy"), pic looks headed toward modest home-turf b.o. and select niche home-format sales offshore.

Henderson's Kate is a comfortably situated professional who at midlife decides to make a major, seemingly backwards career move: Leaving behind years as a sociology lecturer for the much more down-and-dirty job of dealing directly with (she's warned) "some of the most disturbed" at-risk youth. Hired to juvenile residence facility Alpha House, where she's primarily used as an educator to wards of the state (and among them just those few young and baggage-free enough to still be fairly educable), she accepts as an extra responsibility being appointed "key worker" to teen Jamie (Letitia Wright).

It's a task nobody else wants. Jamie has her own problems, but the biggest is her joined-at-the-hip relationship with the volatile Leanne (Isabella Laughland). Both parentless, the girls are longtime besties with a great distrust of outsiders and all authority figures. They're also both fast approaching 18, and the end of softball court sentencing, with two long records of juvenile offenses already trailing behind them.

Kate, who belongs to a community pop choir, takes appreciative note of Jamie's taste in music (old-school R&B) and her singing voice. The lass has never been asked to join anything in her life, so despite some initial anxiety it's an exhilarating step forward when she's welcomed into this dedicated amateur musical group. This coincides with Leanne being sent to lockup for yet another serious infraction. Each time she returns, she resents more deeply her best/only mate's new, independent goals and obligations, blaming "posh cow" Kate for driving them apart. This conflict escalates farther when Jamie gets a shot at a music-school scholarship, while rudderless, drugged-up Leanne threatens to drag them both into a permanent, prison-bound spiral.

Generic

Opening with footage of the 2011 Tottenham riots (where our fictive young heroine gets into looting mischief, and which are also the subject of TIFF-screened docu "The Hard Stop"), "Urban Hymn" soon leaves behind any particular current-events specificity in favor of a fairly generic redemption-amidst-strife narrative in Nick Moorcroft's workmanlike script.

Henderson is OK as a familiar type of movie do-gooder who's in over her head but still manages to truly "make a difference." Wright (of tube skein "Top Boy") is adequate as Jamie, though she sticks overmuch to one emotionally withdrawn note, and her thin singing voice hardly seems to merit the enthusiasm showered on it. Her climactic concert recital here sums up the

film's shortcomings by being a tepid expression of familiar melodrama emotions that pic tries to pass off as revelatory. (Mercifully, "Hymn's" second half phases out the appearances of the community choir, whose bland versions of patly inspirational tunes aren't so far from Up With People terrain.)

In an admittedly showy role — one whose name rather needlessly reprises that of thesp's rater in the "Harry Potter" movies — Laughland is the standout here, conveying the bottomless anger that masks a vulnerability born from a young lifetime's myriad rejections. Steven Mackintosh and Ian Hart play Kate's skeptical but generally supportive husband and choirmaster, respectively; Billy Bragg turns up briefly as himself, promoting a real-life program (Jail Guitar Doors) of guitar lessons for correctional inmates.

Caton-Jones ("Rob Roy," "This Boy's Life") keeps things moving with a brisk editorial pace and clean widescreen visual presentation, though material could have used a little more stylistic personality than pro design/tech package provides.

Also:

BANGKOK: Social workers in Thailand think the tragic story of the late singer and songwriter **Amy Winehouse** can be a lesson to wayward youth, so they are treating about 100 of them to a movie about her.

Winehouse, bedeviled by addictions to drug and drink before her death in 2011 at the age of 27, was the subject of a well-received documentary this year, "Amy."

The Thai Health Promotion Foundation

and the Stop Drink Network arranged for nearly 100 boys from a juvenile detention center, together with dozens of university students and members of various youth groups, to watch the film on Wednesday, saying they hope it inspires them to overcome their own problems.

The film documents Winehouse's talent, how she tried to cope with the pressures of fame, and her death of accidental alcohol poisoning.

"I think Amy's story is a real story that reflects real problems in the society, especially among teenagers. When Amy felt too much pressured, she acted out and started drinking, but she was gifted and she found that gift. It's not too late for the students to find their gifts and learn from her mistakes," said **Kamron Chudecha** of the Stop Drink Network.

Even though Winehouse was a celebrity with fans around the world, Kamron said he sees a lot of similarities between her problems and those of juveniles in detention centers.

"These kids think the society labels them as drug addicts, alcohol addicts and criminals. When one hits rock bottom, it takes a lot of courage to fight the loneliness and criticism, like when Amy had to fight the media attention and people around her. Amy lost the battle, but these kids still have a chance," he said.

The juvenile detention center outside Bangkok houses youths sent there for serious crimes such as murder and drug-related crimes with sentences of five years or more. Books and movies are shown and discussed as part of effort to rehabilitate them.

working with Miyazaki on the Boro project. He will presumably help Miyazaki, who stayed with traditional 2D hand-drawn animation throughout his career, make the leap to CG. Whether the film will be fully 3D and CG or have a hand-drawn look made with the aid of CG technology, is not yet known.



Sharif



Fahmy

Steve N' Steven, a production house with extensive CG animation expertise launched in 2011 by ad agency giant Hakuodo and Hakuodo DY Media Partners, is reportedly participating in the making of the film. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Danish

writer-director **Tobias Lindholm** will write Berlin Wall drama "The Tunnels" for FilmNation Entertainment and The Mark Gordon Company.

Variety reported in October that **Paul Greengrass** was attached to direct. Lindholm's "A War," which he wrote and directed, premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

"The Tunnels" is based on **Greg Mitchell's** book about the untold true story of an escape forged by a group of West Germans trying to get their loved ones out of East Berlin, with the unlikely help of American news networks.

The film will be produced by Mark Gordon, who brought the idea to

Greengrass and attached him to direct. Gordon and Michele Wolhoff then brought the project to FilmNation's Aaron Ryder who will also produce. Ben Browning and Glen Basner from FilmNation Entertainment and Christos Konstantakopoulos will executive produce. (RTRS)

Features

ARABO TIMES

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2015

LOS ANGELES: Oscar-winning Danish Director **Bille August** ("Pelle the Conqueror") will head the main jury of the 37th Cairo Film Festival which will pay tribute to the memory of the late great **Omar Sharif** and also honor popular Egyptian actor **Hussein Fahmy** with a lifetime achievement award.

August a double Palme d'Or winner, also known for "Smilla's Sense Of Snow," "The House of Spirits," and "Les Misérables," will bring his latest film, "Silent Heart," to the Cairo fest which will run Nov 11-20.

The tribute to Omar Sharif, who died aged 83 in July, will take place Nov 12 and involve onstage testimonials from several international and Egyptian artists who worked with the first Arab actor to achieve worldwide fame.

Besides classics Sharif starred in, such as "Lawrence of Arabia," the Cairo fest will also screen lesser known gems such as a restored version of French director **Jacques Barati**'s 1958 romancer "Goha," featuring one of Sharif's earlier roles which he plays opposite **Claudia Cardinale**. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES/TOKYO: Animation maestro **Hayao Miyazaki** is teaming with CG animator **Yuei Sakuragi** to make a short film, Miyazaki's first animation since his 2013 feature "The Wind Rises," Japanese media reports.

A previously announced project, the as-yet untitled short is set for screenings at a museum in Tokyo dedicated to the work of Studio Ghibli, the animation house Miyazaki co-founded in 1985. Following his September 2013 retirement from feature filmmaking, Miyazaki said that the short would be made using CG and about the adventures of a hairy caterpillar named Boro that he previously sketched in 1995.

Appearing on the Nico Nico video portal site on Sept. 21, Sakuragi revealed that he was