

The 11 sisters of Siervas are rock band like 'nun' other

GARDEN GROVE, California, Sept 18, (Agencies): Eleven nuns take the stage wearing traditional black-and white habits but are anything but old school as they belt out songs to the ringing of electric guitar and a rock 'n' roll beat.

Known as "Siervas", the band was born in a Peruvian convent three years ago and now travels far and wide to perform.

Of all the extraordinary things about Siervas the most remarkable may be they are not just a novelty. They have a genuine international following.

Their songs of love and faith have earned over a million YouTube views, led to the release of two CDs and now they are waiting to see if they are among the honorees when Latin Grammy nominations are announced Wednesday.

Siervas recently traveled to Southern California and drew 4,000 people when they headlined a Spanish-language Catholic Music Festival.

"Everyone was calling our office saying we want to see these nuns, when are they singing?" said Ryan Lilyengren, spokesman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, which organized the event. "They're sharing their message in a way people are willing to hear it".

The nuns, who come from eight countries and range in age from 20s to 40s, insist they aren't rock stars. But they certainly act the part when on stage performing to the electric guitar, steady drumbeat and catchy lyrics, uniformly smiling as silver crosses dangle from their necks.

Their name Siervas — Spanish for "the servants" — comes from the convent where the band was formed and still lives.

At first, they composed and played music together as a hobby after spending days praying with incarcerated women and the poor in Peruvian shantytowns.

When Siervas had enough original music they compiled a CD. That led to a concert performance that attracted local media attention in Peru and then invitations to perform in nearby Colombia and Ecuador. Interest skyrocketed on the internet and the group released a second CD.

Skills

Now, they rehearse together twice a week, melding upbeat lyrics with Latin pop and rock. Each nun also practices daily on her own, honing skills on instruments ranging from cello to electric guitar.

A YouTube video of the group standing on a rooftop helipad overlooking Lima, Peru, and belting out their song "Confía en Dios" — or "Trust in God" — has more than 1 million views.

The band's popularity comes at a time when the Catholic Church and other religious organizations are seeking to draw younger people. Among America's so-called millennial generation, more than a third reported no religious affiliation and only 16 percent identified as Catholic, according to a 2014 study by the Washington-based Pew Research Center.

"Modern times have modern music", said Sister Monica Nobl, a 40-year-old vocalist. "Pop-rock music is a kind of music we've heard all our lives. We grew up with that kind of music, so it's also just natural to use it".

Sister Andrea Garcia, 47, remembers listening to Michael Jackson when she was a college student. She thought she'd pursue a career in biology, but found faith instead.

"We think this music, or this genre, resonates with young people today", said Garcia, a composer and vocalist from Argentina. "Our goal is that through the melodies, our lyrics will reach people".

They sing in Spanish and their themes are Christian, but fans post

messages to them on social media from Asia and Europe as well as Latin America. And while many fans are devout Catholics, others are from different denominations or even atheists, Garcia said.

Milagros Izagara, a 53-year-old real estate agent in Simi Valley, California, said she isn't particularly religious but was drawn to the band's songs encouraging unity.

"I am not a churchgoer, but I love this music", said Izagara, who helped start a Peruvian community organization in Southern California. "I love it because they are breaking a paradigm. They are out of the box".

Also:

MONTREAL: One year after **Leonard Cohen** died, top musicians including **Sting**, **Elvis Costello** and **Philip Glass** will remember him with a concert in his native Montreal, his family announced Monday.

The Nov 6 tribute at Montreal's Bell Centre arena will benefit Canadian arts groups and is expected to be attended by Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**.

Inviting the legendary songwriter's fans from around the world to visit Montreal for the concert, his son **Adam Cohen** said his father had given him instructions only to bury him in the city alongside his parents and to keep his memorial service small.

But he said, "if you want a public event do it in Montreal", the younger Cohen, also a musician, said in a statement.

"I see this concert as a fulfillment of my duties to my father that we gather in Montreal to ring the bells that still can ring", he said.

Costello and Sting, like Cohen, are both songwriters known for their literary sensibilities, while Glass is among the most influential living composers.

Music

Variety



Canadian-Iranian director Sadaf Foughi receives the prizes of The International Federation of Film Critics for 'Ava' during the 2017 Toronto International Film Festival Awards ceremony at the TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto, Ontario on Sept 17. (AFP)

Film

'Operation Mekong' bags China's Golden Rooster Prize

'Three Billboards' wins at Toronto fest

TORONTO, Canada, Sept 18, (Agencies): Martin McDonagh's darkly hilarious drama "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" won the Toronto Film Festival's audience prize for best picture on Sunday, giving it a leg up in the race for the Oscars.

The rage-fueled film stars Frances McDormand as a frustrated and grieving mother, Mildred, who antagonizes police (Woody Harrelson and Sam Rockwell) while trying to call attention to a lack of progress in the hunt for her daughter's killer.

Months have passed without an arrest in the murder case, so she commissions three signs with controversial messages for police along a road leading into the fictional Missouri town.

But a backlash ensues. Mildred's friends and the freckle-faced and cocky young agent (Caleb Landry Jones) who rents her the billboard space are targeted by the chief's intellectually and emotionally stunted deputy, in violent reprisals that cost him his badge.

Australia's Abbie Cornish and "Game of Thrones" actor Peter Dinklage also star in the film, which is McDonagh's third after "In Bruges" and "Seven Psychopaths".

In a statement, McDonagh called the win "thrilling". "You never really know if a story as heartfelt but also as outrageous and funny and unusual as ours is but really connected to, you know, real people", he said. "So it's brilliant to hear that it has".

In Venice, where the film premiered, the British-Irish playwright said he wrote the script specifically for McDonagh based on an idea that began to germinate 20 years ago when he was traveling across America by bus.

A decade later, as he pondered a hard-to-explain billboard that had stuck in his mind — involving a mother whose daughter was raped and murdered — he began to flesh out a back story.

"Once I had decided it was a mother, the film wrote itself", he said. "And picturing Frances in my mind helped me write it".

Runners-up for the festival's audience prize were

Craig Gillespie's "I, Tonya" about disgraced figure skater Tonya Harding, and the coming-of-age drama "Call Me By Your Name", directed by Luca Guadagnino.

More than 300 feature and short films from 74 countries were screened at the Toronto festival, the biggest in North America.

The event is often seen as a way for Oscar-conscious studios to generate buzz about their movies, with hundreds of filmmakers and actors walking the red carpet in Canada's largest city.

In past years, films such as "Spotlight", "12 Years a Slave", and "Slumdog Millionaire" have gone on from winning the audience prize in Toronto to taking top honors at the Oscars.

Last year, the musical "La La Land" won the Toronto prize and then took home six Oscars, including best actress and best director — but not the top prize, despite the shocking mix-up with "Moonlight" at the end of the gala.

Other accolades at the Toronto festival on Sunday went to Wayne Wapeemukwa for "Luk' Luk'!" and Robin Aubert for "Les Affames", as well as to Huang Hsin-Yao for "The Great Buddha+" and Warwick Thornton for "Sweet Country".

The International Federation of Film Critics awarded prizes to Sadaf Foughi for "Ava", about a rebellious girl in Iran who fights repression by her parents and society, and to Manuel Martin Cuenca for "The Motive" (El Autor).

Mahour Jabbari, who played the titular Ava and her co-star Shayesteh Sajadi had been denied entry into Canada to attend the festival.

Audiences also chose Joseph Kahn's satirical look at the brutal sport of baste rapping in "Bodied" over runners-up Craig Zahler's "Brawl in Cell Block 99" and James Franco's "The Disaster Artist" for a Midnight Madness prize.

Their pick for best documentary was "Faces Places" by Agnes Varda and street artist JR, which beat out

Morgan Spurlock sequel's "Super Size Me 2: Holy Chicken!" and "Long Time Running", directed by Jennifer Baichwal and Nicholas De Pencier.

Winners

■ **Midnight Madness:** Joseph Kahn's "Bodied"
 ■ **Documentary:** Agnes Varda and JR's "Faces Places"
 ■ **International Platform award:** Warwick Thornton's "Sweet Country"

■ **Fipresci awards — Discovery:** Sadaf Foughi's "Ava"
 ■ **Special Presentations:** Manuel Martin Cuenca's "The Motive"

■ **NETPAC award:** Huang Hsin-Yao's "The Great Buddha+"

■ **Best Canadian short film:** Marc-Antoine Lemire's "Pre-Drink"

■ **Best short film:** Niki Lindroth von Bahr's "The Burden"

■ **Best Canadian first feature:** Wayne Wapeemukwa's "Luk' Luk'!"

■ **Best Canadian feature:** Robin Aubert's "Les Affames"

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Patriotic Chinese action movie, "Operation Mekong" was named best picture at **China's** annual Golden Rooster and Hundred Flowers Film Festival. "I am not Madame Bovary" picked up three prizes, including those for director **Feng Xiaogang** and lead actress **Fan Bingbing**, according to local media reports.

The event is **China's** longest running film festival and shifts location annually. This year, the ceremony was held in **Hohhot, Inner Mongolia** on Saturday.

Deng Chao picked up the best actor award for his role in "Dead End". **Wu Yanshu** earned the best supporting actress prize for housing drama "Relocate". The best supporting actor prize was split between **Wang Qianyuan** in "Saving Mr Wu" and **Yu Hewei** in "Madame Bovary".

Features

ARABIC TIMES

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2017

NEW YORK: The Stephen King adaptation "It" continues to scare up record ticket sales, taking in an estimated \$60 million in its second week and leaving a paltry \$7.5 million for **Darren Aronofsky's** audacious genre-bending psychological thriller "mother".

New Line and Warner Bros' "It" remained easily the top draw in North American theaters, according to studio estimates Sunday. It slid 51 percent from last week's unexpectedly sensational opening of \$123 million, the first September release to debut north of \$100 million. Most had expected "It" to open to about half that. (AP)

LOS ANGELES: Two months after it opened in **North America**, Fox's "War for the Planet of the Apes" is leading the international box office.

That is, thanks to **China**, which is gradually seeing Hollywood films cash in following a summer blackout period. This weekend "Apes" is making \$62.9 million total overseas from 21 territories. The threequel has now earned \$287.9 million from the international box office and combined with its domestic grosses, totals \$433.8 million in spoils worldwide. That's still less than the past two installments. 2011's "Rise of the Planet of the Apes" (481.8 million) and 2014's "Dawn of the Planet of the Apes" (710.6 million). (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: Love and equality reigned supreme at Regency Village Theatre Saturday night, where stars, athletes, and tennis fanatics alike united for the Los Angeles premiere of "Battle of the Sexes".

"Come to a place where it doesn't matter what gender you are, it doesn't matter what race you are, it doesn't matter what your sexuality is — everyone is absolutely equal. That's humanity and that's just the truth", said **Emma Stone**, who stars as tennis legend and equal rights activist **Billie Jean King** in the sports

biopic. (RTRS)

LOS ANGELES: "War for the Planet of the Apes" swung into **China** and knocked "Spider-Man: Homecoming" off its perch at the top of the weekend box office. "Apes" won comfortable with a \$60 million haul in three days. The film enjoyed some 115,000



Aronofsky



Stone

screenings per day, or about half the available total nationwide. It took \$18.8 million on Friday, \$23.6 million on Saturday, and a steady \$17.6 million on Sunday, according to data from Ent Group. Midnight screenings and previews accounted for over \$1 million. The total included \$5 million from 437 IMAX screens. (RTRS)

LONDON: Lady Gaga has postponed her world tour's European leg until next year because of on-going health problems, the tour's promoter said Monday.

The six-week part of the Joanne World Tour was set to kick off in **Barcelona** on Sept 21 and end on Oct 28 in **Germany**. Lady Gaga was also due to perform in **Switzerland, Italy,**

Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Britain, Denmark and **Sweden**.

"Lady Gaga is suffering from severe physical pain that has impacted her ability to perform", tour promoter Live Nation said. "She remains under the care of expert medical professionals who recommended the postponement". (AP)