

Eva Longoria Bastón's doc looks at Chávez, De La Hoya fight

By Lindsey Bahr

Boxing legend Oscar De La Hoya wanted to make a documentary about his 1996 fight against Julio César Chávez. It was coming up on 25 years since the "Ultimate Glory" showdown and he figured the time was right to look back. So he asked Eva Longoria Bastón, his friend of 20 years, if she'd be interested in directing.

"I was like, 'Oh, God, no. No, no, no,'" Bastón laughed. "The last thing I wanted to do was a boxing doc with stats and jabs."

She remembered the night of the bout, of course. "You didn't even have to be a boxing fan to know where you were the day that that fight happened," Bastón said. "My entire neighborhood was like looking for stolen cable to watch it, or like one person's TV to pay for the fight. You know, 'Everybody come over and we all pitch in a dollar!'"

But then she started to think about that moment and how divisive it was to Mexican-Americans. Chávez was a Mexican national. De La Hoya was from East Los Angeles. And she realized that was the movie she wanted to make.

The end result is "La Guerra Civil," a DAZN Originals production which premiered last Thursday at the Sundance Film Festival.

"I said, what's interesting to me is to really go back and explore that divide because we are still encountering it today. You know, the question of 'Am I Mexican enough?' And the question of who can claim

that they are quote-unquote Mexican and how you straddle the hyphen of being Mexican-American," she said. "I live that experience. I straddle that hyphen every day of my life. And to do it on a public stage that big, that publicly? For Oscar, it was heartbreaking."

It is, what she lovingly calls, "boxing adjacent," including interviews with Chávez, De La Hoya and his Mexican trainer at the time, Jesus Rivero, but also with academics and onlookers who examine the cultural divide then and now.

Interviews

And though many of the cards were in place for Bastón and her team to get the access and interviews they needed, she also shot the documentary during COVID-19, which led to more than a few headaches and obstacles.

De La Hoya, she knew, wasn't going to be a problem. "I knew most of the stories he was telling. And I think it helped the documentary to have that intimate connection," she said. "I think he had a comfort level with me that allowed him to explore the emotions raw. You could feel his pain and him remembering the pain of being booed by his own people. I think our friendship allowed that vulnerability to come through."

But she hadn't met Chávez yet and was a little nervous that she'd be able to establish a bond to get what she needed.

"You want an intimate conversation and it's hard to do that when you have a plexiglass, a mask, a shield and you're 8 feet away," she said.

It turns out she needn't have worried.

"He's so charismatic, so charming. And he's a truth-teller. He's a very reliable narrator," she said. "It's a beautiful, refreshing thing to have somebody in a documentary not revise history. He really remembered the struggles. He remembered the challenges. He remembered the good times, too, but not without the bad."

Rivera was one of the trickiest interviews to secure. He was 103 at the time and his family was not keen on letting a camera crew travel to Mexico to interview him at the height of COVID-19. They even assembled a cut without him, but held out hope and eventually got the interview.

Now she's hopeful that the film will reach a large audience — including those who may not think that a sports or boxing documentary is for them.

"We are still dealing with these similar issues, especially with immigration being such a hot topic and the economy being hit so hard by COVID and our community, the Mexican community, being disproportionately affected by COVID, I think all of it is still fertile ground for conversation," she said. "Let's find our commonalities more so than our differences because we have a lot bigger issues to face and need to face them together." (AP)

Film

Variety



This image released by Gravitas shows Pierce Brosnan, (left), and Kaya Scodelario in a scene from 'The King's Daughter.' (AP)

Film

A romantic comedy, period drama or fairy tale?

'King's Daughter' a royal, watery mess

By Mark Kennedy

Once upon a time there was a film that didn't know what it was. A romantic comedy? Perhaps. A period drama? A fairy tale? A tween fantasy mixed with royal intrigue? No matter. Producers threw a lot of cash at the film and filled it with movie stars. That's why we now have "The King's Daughter" and all the stars lived happily ever after, counting their money.

January is often where bad films are stashed, but "The King's Daughter" isn't just bad, it's a cloying, clichéd mess that's not worth even the slightest risk of contacting COVID-19 to see in theaters. Another clue? It was shot in 2014 and only released now. That raises confidence levels, huh?

The film is set in 1684 at the Palace at Versailles and yet everyone weirdly has an upper-class English accent and Tom Ford-like outfits. King Louis XIV has found an answer to outsmarting his own mortality: A mermaid. Yes, a mermaid — from the lost city of Atlantis, no less — which has the power of healing. He intends to suck out its life force during a solar eclipse, which everyone knows gives mermaid slaughter an extra zestiness, am I right?

But his plans are complicated by the arrival of his secret, illegitimate daughter, who bonds with the mermaid. She's a fish out of water, too: Locked away in a convent for decades and unfamiliar with the intrigue at court, where everyone looks like they're in a snarky Vogue spread with way too much eye makeup.

Pierce Brosnan plays the randy king with rock star hair, an arch roguishness and a hand always on his hip. Benjamin Walker channels his inner Johnny Depp to play a Jack Sparrow-looking dashing ship captain who falls for the cello-playing king's daughter, played by a breathless Kaya Scodelario, who, appropriately, was in the last "Pirates of the Caribbean" film.

The rest of the cast includes Pablo Schreiber as an

overacting scheming royal advisor and William Hurt — seriously William Hurt — as a priest. He doesn't have to get out of neutral to show he's the best actor here, albeit with a terrible movie agent. And Julie Andrews — the real Julie Andrews — has been enlisted as the narrator, thankfully avoiding a deeper career quagmire by avoiding the set altogether.

Speaking of the set, director Sean McNamara has gotten access to Versailles and is not subtle about showing it off in golden light — for what feels like hours. (It's "the stuff of dreams," we are told.) An underground grotto, on the other hand, looks like it was designed by glue-sniffing teenagers.

Effects

Overall, it's a weirdly edited film, with scenes choppy ending, slo-mos added for dramatic entrances on horseback, swimming sequences that try really hard to be full of awe, poor fight choreography at the end and an excruciating minuet between father and daughter. The special effects are pretty silly looking, too.

Screenwriters Barry Berman and James Schamus use the kind of stilted, overcooked language that sounds weighty but really paper over a painful dishonesty. "It is Satan's voice that calls you to the unholy sea," Rachel Griffiths — another star wasted here — is forced to say as an abbess. Brosnan is unfortunate to get many of the worst lines, from the bombastic "My immortality secures the future of France!" to the banal: "Life is filled with suffering, my child. And you have suffered with such grace."

Hurt can't escape without uttering one clunker — "God has graced you with wings. I only hope you know how to fly," he says to the daughter — and he delivers it as best as it can be done. But this is a fish tale and it uses the wrong analogy. That's fitting for a massive misfire of a film.

"The King's Daughter" is based on Vonda N. McIntyre's 1997 novel "The Moon and the Sun," but the film owes much to "Shape of Water" and

"The Green Mile." Why it ever was exhumed from its watery grave is a mystery. It will suck out your own life force.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Lily Tomlin is this year's recipient of AARP The Magazine's Movies for Grownups Awards career achievement honor.

The 82-year-old actor, comedian and star of "Grace and Frankie" and "9 to 5" will receive the honor at the AARP's annual Best Movies and TV for Grownups ceremony, the group announced Wednesday. The 20th anniversary virtual event, hosted by Alan Cumming, will be telecast on "Great Performances" on PBS on March 18.

"We are thrilled to honor Lily Tomlin, a trailblazer whose six-decade career as an actress, comedian, writer and advocate continues to break through boundaries today," AARP CEO Jo Ann Jenkins said in a statement. "In her current role on 'Grace and Frankie,' in which she portrays issues of aging with respect, originality and hilarity, she continues to dismantle outdated stereotypes."

Tomlin responded with the catchphrase of her child sketch character from TV's "Laugh-In," **Ed-ith Ann**.

"There are so few grownups in the world. I am happy to be one. I feel I am not only a grownup, but I am mature for my age and that's the truthhhhh!" Tomlin said in statement.

The AARP's Movies for Grownups program champions movies that resonate with viewers 50 and over, and fights ageism in the entertainment industry.

Tomlin, whose credits also include "Nashville," "Short Cuts" and "The West Wing," is the winner of six Emmys, two Tonys, a Grammy, and a lifetime achievement award from the Screen Actors Guild.

Previous recipients of the award include **Michael Douglas, Shirley MacLaine, Morgan Freeman, George Clooney, Annette Bening, Helen Mirren** and **Susan Sarandon**. (AP)

Features

ARABIC TIMES

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2022

LOS ANGELES: After spending one weekend in second place, "Spider-Man: No Way Home" proved it still had some fight left. Sony's superhero juggernaut swung back to first place in its sixth weekend in theaters and became the sixth highest grossing film of all time, globally.

The film topped the North American charts with \$14.1 million, according to studio estimates on Sunday. Globally, it's now grossed nearly \$1.7 billion, passing the total earnings of both "Jurassic World" and "The Lion King." And in **North America** its \$721 million make it the fourth biggest release ever.

Peter Parker also stole first place back from "Scream," which fell about 59% — a typical drop for a horror — in its second weekend with an estimated \$12.4 million in ticket sales. The Paramount release has grossed \$51.3 million so far.

Universal and Illumination's "Sing 2" landed in third place in its fifth weekend, with \$5.7 million. The animated title has earned \$241.2 million worldwide.

There was little competition for the holdovers to contend with this weekend. The only two fresh offerings nationwide in theaters were comparatively lower-profile releases: "The King's Daughter," a fairy tale with **Pierce Brosnan** that was filmed in 2014 and held until now (it bombed with \$750,000 from over 2,000 locations), and "Redeeming Love," a historical romance with **Nina Dobrev** that cracked the top five with \$3.7 million. (AP)

NEW YORK: Receiving a literary prize from the American Library Association is a kind of homecoming for the essayist-poet **Hanif Abdurraqib**.

"When I was young, I treated the library as a place to pass time, to get lost in books that I could have otherwise not afforded to own, music that I could not have afforded to have," Abdurraqib, 38, a recipient of an Andrew Carnegie Medal for "A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance," said in a recent interview.

On Sunday, the library association awarded Abdurraqib the medal for excellence in nonfic-

tion and gave the fiction prize to 25-year-old **Tom Lin**, the youngest ever Carnegie winner, for his debut novel "The Thousand Crimes of Ming Tsu." Each author receives \$5,000 and will be honored in June at the association's annual conference.

Abdurraqib is a **Columbus, Ohio** native who returned there a



Lin



Abdurraqib

few years ago, and the library system has been a thread throughout — whether a quiet place for his imagination, a refuge during times he was short of money or a source for a favorite book. He currently lives near the **Martin Luther King Branch** of the Columbus Metropolitan Library and stops by often.

"I made a conscious decision to cut down on the amount of books in my home over the past two years, which means I get to return to the delight of getting books from the library — being on a waiting list and getting the email that my time has come," he says. "All of that stuff. It's like returning to the version of myself

that looked at the place with a sense of endless wonder, which is cool."

Abdurraqib's other books include the poetry collections "The Crown Ain't Worth Much" and "A Fortune for Your Disaster." Last year, he was named a recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant." (AP)