

JOURNAL DE BOYD

LUXFILMFEST
FESTIVAL EDITION

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In this *Journal de Boyd* — a play on the French term “Journal de bord” or “logbook,” just because it sounds sexier than “Logboyd” — I’ll talk a little bit about the hows and whys behind the selection of films playing at the LuxFilmFest this year. Of course, as the Curator at Large of the festival, I didn’t program them alone. Quite the contrary, as it has been a yearlong conversation with our Artistic Director, Alexis Juncosa, our tireless Programme Coordinator, Tobias Tersteegen, and the entire Artistic Committee.

Before diving into specific titles, I want to say something about the specific context of this year’s edition, which was curated mostly from our homes.

Of course, a person’s appreciation of a movie isn’t absolute even if the movies themselves don’t change. Movies don’t mean the same thing at different times in our lives and our reaction to them might be coloured by things we’ve recently experienced or we’ve started to appreciate with age. It is also true specifically of the annus horribilis that was 2020, which influenced the way we appreciated and responded to all the films we watched from our living room. We sifted through countless films and reunited weekly on Zoom to talk about what we watched and to try and come up with the best possible program. Meeting people only virtually inevitably impacted the way we looked at films, the way we talked about films and what resonated with us — and what didn’t.

I think that very generally speaking, this year our films tend to be a little more intimate and focus more on human relationships. The spectacle in the films we’ve selected doesn’t necessarily come from lavish costumes and thousands of extras this year, from countless special effects or complicated stories told over years and years (though there is a little of that too, of course). Instead, it might be a small revelation, or a touching gesture, or an ending that asks more questions than it answers. An ending that might resonate more or more intensely because we too are living in times with lots of questions and oftentimes the answers seem chaotic or contradictory — and that is, when we get any answers at all.

For me, there is one film in particular, Leonardo Medel’s Chilean fiction feature *La Veronica* (shown out of competition), that personifies more than any other film

the kind of film that resonated differently this year. It’s about the titular character, a footballer’s wife, played by Mariana Di Girólamo (the star of Pablo Larrain’s *Ema*, which we showed at the festival last year). Her biggest desire and dream is to become a social-media influencer and, one senses, to find her own place under the sun and come out of the shadow of her more famous husband.

The entire film, we stick closely to Veronica’s point-of-view. So closely actually, that the feature seems to have been stitched together from Instagram-type videos, with Veronica always front and center. The result is a very claustrophobic view of the protagonist’s life, boxed in by the almost-square aspect ratio and where she forces herself to be the centre of attention, literally and often not all that naturally.

The real tragedy of Veronica’s character emerges from the cracks between the image she thinks she’s presenting of herself and the way in which we, in the audience, start to see her as someone who has to bend over backwards to create a reality that doesn’t exist. The film’s tightly controlled technical setup resonates more with us this year because we’ve all been boxed in at home to, desperate for attention or at least for a kind of human connection.

The American critic Roger Ebert has talked about movies as “empathy machines” and we hope that our selection this year will provide you with portraits of human who, with all their faults and through all their bad decisions, make you empathize a little more with others. We don’t need to agree with or even condone every kind of behaviour from everyone but a first step in approaching any person is to try and understand where they are coming from. Veronica, like many of us, feels boxed in and just wants to be seen and loved. **BOYD VAN HOEIJ**

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A FEW WORDS ON THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT OF THIS YEAR’S EDITION