



Woman, Basque Build, Buzz and Business

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Blessed by sun, a steady sustenance of Donostia winning stars and a stream of production announcements, the San Sebastian Film Festival rounded its final bend on Friday after a robust 67th edition.

San Sebastian's status as the highest-profile movie event in the Spanish-speaking world remains unquestioned. The maelstrom of change - imminent global platforms, markets, Latin American politics - could not but play out over events, forging a festival of sharp contrasts and little granularity about how major pivots in the global business could impact the Spanish-language arthouse business and new directors.

David Zonana's *Workforce*, Ina Weisse's *The Audition* and Sarah Gravron's *Rocks* have gone down well in competition. With votes still being counted, Ana Garcia Blaya's *The Good Intentions* heads the Youth TCM Award polls and Eric Toledano and Olivier Nakache's Cannes closer *The Specials* the City of Donostia Audience Award.

Women rocked much of this year's fest. Laura Baumeister's *Daughter of Rage* and Fernanda Veladez's *Non Distinguishing Features* won in the industry sidebar. In main competition the front-runner, at least for Spanish critics polled by *El Diario Vasco*, is Belén Funes' *A Thief's Daughter*.

Of Basque fare, Moriarti-Irusion scored with *The Endless Trench*, currently second in the "El Diario Vasco" critics' poll, bowing a week after Galder Gaztelu-Urrutia's *The Platform*, produced by Basque Films, won Toronto's Grolsch People's Choice Midnight Madness Award.

The big deals came from big players.

San Sebastian began with a bang: Telefonica and Atresmedia's MOU to create a content production-joint ven-



El Príncipe.

ture to produce for themselves as well as for or with third-party global platforms. Netflix confirmed that it would be announcing new talents and new formats and programs focused on new talent, not only in Spain but Latin America and other European countries. Warner Bros. Pictures Intl. grabbed near-worldwide distribution rights to *El Verano Que Vivimos*, a romantic melodrama co-produced with Atresmedia Cine, Bambú Producciones and La Claqueta. Ex-Rouge Intl.'s Nadia Turincev announced part of her first slate at Easy Riders Films, a new Paris-based production house.

Haut et Court moved to take Alejandro Amenabar's *While at War* off the market for France. MK2 announced international sales on Avalon produced *Alcarrás*, from *Summer 1993*'s Carla Simón. Producer Marta Esteban confirmed Cesc Gay's next film, *Sentimental*, sold by Filmax which also revealed overseas sales rights on Álvaro Fernández Armero's comedy *If I Were a Rich Man*, Argentine producer-director Beda Docampo's *The*

Curse of the Handsome Man, and Basque hit comedy sequel *Bye, Bye, Mr Etxebeste*. Outsider Pictures picked U.S. domestic on two titles: Gabriel Mascaro's Sundance hit *Divine Love* and Belgian Oscar submission *Our Mothers*, a Cannes Camera d'Or winner. New Europe Film Sales swooped on *Blanquita* from Chile's Fernando Guzzoni. FiGa Films snagged *Contactado* from the *Pelo Malo* team of Marité Ugás and Mariana Rondón

Cosimo Santoro's Italy-based sales company The Open Reel announced it has sold Ricky Mastro's LGBT drama *7 Minutes*, its first full feature production, to Breaking Glass Pictures for North America, as well as one of its new Portuguese feature *Variacoes - Guardian Angel* to France's Optimale, and a double sale to Here Media for North America on features *Second Star on the Right* by Colombian Ruth Caudeli and *Brief Story of the Green Planet* by Argentine Santiago Loza. Both titles were also sold to Filmin for Spain, together with Brazilian documentary *Mr. Leather*.

San Sebastian served as the launchpad for a new Spanish sales agent, the Canary Islands-based Bendita Film Sales. At the festival, Bendita picked-up international rights to two titles: Jonás Trueba's coming-of-age feature *La Virgen de Agosto*, winner of a Special Jury mention and the FIPRESCI award at the latest Karlovy Vary; and Peruvian brothers Diego and Daniel Vega's Horizontes Latinos player *La bronca*, produced by Maretazo Cine. Backed by production companies El Viaje Films and Volcano Films, the new sales house aims to handle each year worldwide rights to eight-to-ten arthouse films, with commercial outlet, mainly in Spanish-language. "The number of Spanish sales companies has been gradually decreasing, we think we can find our place in the market," Bendita CEO Luis Renart told "Variety" in San Sebastian.

Gilles Duffaut's Axxon Films unveiled at the festival the sale to Bet TV in Belgium of Egypt-Luxembourg co-production comedy *Sawah*, directed by Adolf El Assal, scheduled for a February 2020 release.

"This is a highly competitive market and audiences are very selective when it comes to betting on indie films. So, we are increasingly reducing the number of projects in which we get involved," said Alex Lafuente at Bteam Pictures. But indie distributors still have to buy. Just before San Sebastián Bteam announced it had acquired Pablo Larrain's *Ema*, a Venice Unimed Award winner, sold by The Match Factory. They have also moved into production, teaming with Barcelona's Oberón Cinematográfica on *A Thief's Daughter*.

On the eve of San Sebastian, Basque distributor Barton Films took Spanish rights to Takashi Miike's Zabaltegi player *First Love* from Hanway Films. Barton also acquired Sebastián Muñoz's Venice Queer Lion Award winner *El Príncipe*, a Horizontes Latinos contender. The deal was negotiated with Patra Spanou Film Marketing & Consulting.

Miren Aperribay's Atera Films, a San Sebastian-based indie producer-distributor which recently started to acquire international films for distribution throughout Spain, nabbed at the festival the Venice Feodora Award winner and Horizontes Latinos closer, Jayro Bustamante's *La Llorona*, sold by Vicente Canales' Film Factory Entertainment.

Headed by Emilio Olliete Díaz, indie distributor Syldavia Films, which manages the large library of director-producer Gerardo Herrero's Tornasol Films, has surfed the San Sebastian main competition, nabbing two contenders: Alice Winocour's *Proxima*, a French-German co-production starring Eva Green and Matt Dillon, sold by Pathé Films; and *The Audition*, in a deal with Les Films du Losange.

Spanish rights to another Official Selection player, Louise Archambault's *And the Birds Rained Down*, were acquired at Toronto by Stefan Schmitz's Avalon Distribución Audiovisual.



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