

The Main Feature

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Night Of The Sunflowers

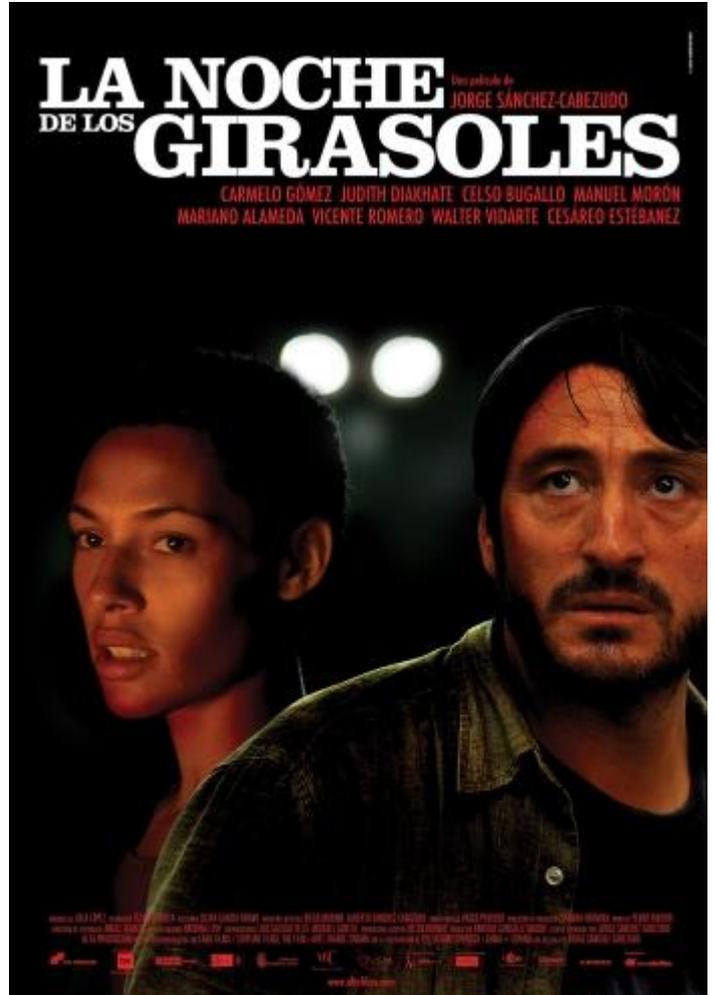
Spain 123 minutes Cert 15
 UK release 27 Aug 2007

Director and writer Jorge Sánchez-Cabezudo
 Music Krishna Levy
 Cinematography Angel Iguacel

CAST:

Mariano Alameda	Pedro
Celso Bugallo	Amadeo
Nadia Casado	La chica
Judith Diakhate	Gabi
Cesareo Est'banez	Cecilio
Carmelo Gomez	Esteban

The first film by Jorge Sánchez-Cabezudo is further demonstration of the wealth of film-making talent that's coming out of the Spanish-speaking world. The acting is impeccable in an ambitiously structured, viscerally tense thriller that shows how a single act of shocking violence affects and compromises the characters involved.



There is an excellent score from Krishna Levy, which certainly adds to the mood.

Sánchez-Cabezudo has described his film as rural noir, and certainly the characters spend much of their time in the shadows. But there is more going on here; the film periodically shifts from one character's viewpoint to another in the telling of its story, using rewinds and overlaps to create unusual shivers of irony and dislocation as each new character moves centre stage.

The following comments are taken from various interviews given by the director:

"In Spain there is a tendency to imitate American thrillers with clichéd characters so I wanted real people, ordinary people who would never imagine they could find themselves in such a situation

In regards to the element of suspense, my intention was to entertain without tricking the spectator by hiding information. I've always been fascinated by Hitchcock, in whose films the spectator always knows something more than the characters. In regards to the dilemmas on human behaviour, I wanted the film to pose questions. I didn't want to impart morality lessons, nor judge the characters, but simply present a situation that is a moral dilemma, a certain state of things. Basically, I was interested in how people react when faced with moral dilemmas, how they face them or whether they simply run away from them to get by in life. Earlier, you spoke about the quality of European films and this was, in fact, one of the premises; wholly Spanish characters, but with conflicts that were not at all geographically recognisable. Everything

had to be understandable, so that it could be as much about Spanish guardias civiles as French Gendarmes or German police officers.

It also reminds us that our actions have consequences – the lives of the characters will never be the same again. And of course that, unlike the movies, real life does not always deliver justice



The film is about the isolation of those living in the Spanish countryside, and the loneliness and violence that city dwellers take with them when they go there

Since the second half of the twentieth century there has been an exodus and many villages have been completely abandoned. Rural cinema was a strong tradition in Spain, we had many films about country life. I wanted to talk about that Spain, but the way it is now. It was important to have a new perspective on what is happening because everything is changing and there is a whole way of life that is going to disappear completely.

Again here I don't have any answers because I know some villagers welcome the changes while others don't, but I'm showing what's happening. And it was perfect for a thriller because there's an atmosphere of decadence. It's also the decadence of the characters. I didn't want to talk about it directly and make a social film. I like films like *The Third Man*, where the decadence of the background invades the characters and causes moral confrontations between them. It's not in the foreground but it's something that enters the characters and is dealt with obliquely through the crime story.

We essentially always wanted the setting to be like a character in the film. In some way, it represents the basis of the story. The agony of the rural areas is also the moral decay of the characters, and, more concretely, the death of one of them could serve as a metaphor for the slow extinction of the rural world, and of our silence and passivity towards this. Perhaps because, like for our characters, it does not directly affect us or we simply ignore the problem. I am left with the wonderful experience of having filmed in these little towns, of having met the few people who still live there, incredible people who opened their doors to us and made our work much easier. But I'm also left with the sad impression of having witnessed the extinction of a way of life. The rural way of life, the kind that my grandparents and parents knew, and probably my son will be able to appreciate. But I'm afraid my grandchildren will have to learn about it through history books."



Iain McGlashan

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Drive-in cinemas: Will they survive the digital age? By Brian Wheeler **BBC News, Washington**

Shankweiler's, in Pennsylvania, first opened its doors in 1934 but current owners Paul and Susan Geisinger fear the 2012 season may be its last. Like many small independent cinemas across America, it could be forced out of business by the cost of converting to digital projection. Mr Geisinger is coming up to retirement age and is not keen on the idea of taking out \$175,000 (£112,000) loan to pay for a digital projector and the necessary building work to house it. "It is a lot of money for a seasonal business. But we have been left with no choice. Either the conversion has to be made or it's going to close," says Mr Geisinger, who started as a projectionist at Shankweiler's in 1971, before buying the business in 1984.

The big Hollywood studios are eager to eliminate the cost of manufacturing and shipping the 35mm film prints that have traditionally been the mainstay of the industry. By posting hard drives instead distributors could save hundreds of millions a year, according to some estimates - a tempting prospect for an industry under pressure from internet piracy and video games. And with more than half the cinema screens in America already converted to digital, experts believe 35mm prints could disappear altogether within two or three years. The industry says digital leads to a quicker turnover of movies, greater choice for consumers, and the promise of 3D and other special features.

But hundreds of small independent cinemas, in the US and around the world, have already decided they cannot afford to buy the equipment needed, say industry sources. The death of the drive-in - if that is what is happening - is likely to be felt more keenly in the US than in a country like the UK, where the concept never really got out of first gear. A generation of Americans spent their formative years - and did their courting - at the drive-in, in an era when the car was king.

At the height of their popularity, in the late 1950s, America had more drive-in movie theatres than indoor screens - more than 4,000 of them. But they declined in the 70s and 80s due to owners cashing in on high land values and the competition of video rentals. About 400 drive-ins have survived to the present day, most of which are small, family-run concerns in rural areas.

Fred Heise took over the Melody Drive-In Theatre, in Knox, Indiana, from his father in the early 1970s, and had hoped to hand the business on to his son, until the digital spectre reared its head. "We will probably end up doing it. It is one of those where you do it kicking and screaming," the 64-year-old says. "One wonders if you would live long enough to completely pay it off."

Today's drive-ins are a far cry from the so-called teenage "passion pits" of 50s legend - you are more likely to be parked next to a pair of "baby boomers" reliving their youth, or a young family enjoying a cheap night out, than a car full of rowdy or amorous teenagers. But despite the pervading air of nostalgia, the owners have tried to keep pace with technology. Patrons can now listen to the movie on their car stereos, on a special FM frequency, rather than through the primitive "sound poles" that sit next to each parking bay. Drive-ins also try to offer better value than the local multiplex. You can normally watch three or four of the latest Hollywood releases for less than \$10 (£6.39) in total, as well as stocking up on popcorn and hot dogs for less than you would pay in one of the major chains.

Few drive-in owners will go hungry, even if they are forced to shut up shop. Many are sitting on prime real estate and should be able to look forward to a comfortable retirement.

They are also reluctant to be seen as standing in the way of progress. "I have seen digital and it is brilliant," says Steve Wilson, owner of the Holiday Drive-In, in Mitchell, Indiana, but he believes the distributors have pushed the technology on independent operators too quickly, before the price of the hardware has a chance to come down. And he believes that if drive-ins are allowed to die, the US will lose a little piece of its soul. "I think it is a big loss to the American people. Everywhere, you see theatres winding down and people are just aghast at what is going on, but they cannot do anything about it."

He will not be among the drive-in owners "retiring to Florida" after "selling their land to Wal-Mart", he is quick to point out, and is currently looking for a job after deciding to get out of the cinema business.

Fewer than 20 drive-in cinemas around the world have so far made the plunge into digital, according to industry experts, and probably no more than four in the US. But the industry has proved remarkably resilient over the years. You get the feeling this particular big screen story may yet have a sequel.

Reactions to **The Illusionist** – 9 February

Score	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Votes	~	~	~	~	~	2	6	10	6	1	~

Total received –

Average Score – 6.92

Your Comments

The best animation I've seen in a very long time
 Clever and sad – hope he lived happily ever after
 I loved the animation – beautiful detail
 I liked the showing of a snippet from 'Mon Oncle'
 A much more enjoyable evening than last time
 A charming film – something quite different
 Fantastic drawings – nice for a change
 Very unusual, amusing and entertaining
 Really enjoyed the film, charming and rather sad – the detail was amazing

Weird but wonderful
 What a sad little film
 Some wonderfully imaginative animation
 A magical reminder of a unique talent
 An unexpected pleasant surprise
 Very enjoyable
 What a great train journey

Tom and Jerry: Great to see again More please Excellent Fun Always a winner

Position	Film	Average Score
1 st	The Secret in their Eyes	8.69
2 nd	The Kings Speech	8.66
3 rd	Made in Dagenham	7.94
4 th	Etre et Avoir	6.94
5 th	The Illusionist	6.92
6 th	Machan	6.81
7 th	Harvey	6.3
8 th	Public Enemies	6.16
9 th	Black Swan	5.88
10 th	The Heartbeat Detector	3.95

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