

Nueve reinas (Nine Queens)

Argentina /114 mins/ 2000

CREW

Director and Writer:
Fabian Bielinsky

Executive Producer: Pablo
Bossi

Cinematography: Marcelo
Camorino

Editing: Sergio Zottola

Art Direction: Marcelo
Salvioli



CAST

Gaston Pauls	Juan
Ricardo Darin	Marcos
Leticia Bredice	Valeria
Tomas Fonzi	Federico
Graciela Tenembaun	Convenience Store Employee
Maria Mercedes Villagara	Convenience Store Employee 2
Gabriel Correa	Convenience Store Manager
Pochi Ducasse	Aunt
Luis Armesto	Bar Waiter
Ernesto Arias	Bar Manager
Amancay Espindola	Woman in Elevator
Isaac Fajm	Vendor
Jorge Noya	Anibal
Oscar Nunez	Sandler
Ignasi Abadal	Vidal Gandolfo

Roberto Rey	Texano
Celia Juarez	Mrs. Sandler
Alejandro Awada	Washington
Antonio Ugo	D'Agostino
Leon Dyzen	Stamp Expert
Elsa Berenguer	Berta
Carlos Falcone	Amante Berta
Carlos Lanari	Man on Cell Phone
Ulises Celestino	Botones
Norberto Arcusin	Official
Gabriel Molinelli	Cardenas
Emanuel Mercado	Boy
Caludio Rissi	Spanish Voice
Ricardo Diaz Mourelle	Ramiro

'NINE Queens' won a brace of awards in its native Argentina and no wonder - this clever caper movie has twists worthy of David Mamet and is enormous fun for thinking audiences.

Marcos is a slick, veteran con man who's looking for a new partner in crime. He finds one in Juan (Gaston Pauls), and proceeds to mastermind a very complex plot to con a visiting billionaire (Ignasi Abadal) out of a set of extremely rare stamps from the Weimar Republic - the "nine queens" of the title.



Meanwhile, Juan, who may not be as naïve as Marcos believes him to be, has an eye on Marcos' beautiful estranged sister (Leticia Bredice) - who warns Juan that Marcos has a reputation for double-crossing his partners.

Indeed, there are as many double-crosses here as in Mamet's "House of Games," the obvious inspiration for first-time director Fabian Bielinsky, who is also well-versed in Alfred Hitchcock.

It would be a crime in itself to reveal the surprises of "Nine Queens," which provides two solid hours of corking entertainment.



The director was interviewed for the BBC Films website:

"Nine Queens" was a huge commercial and critical success in Argentina, but apparently it took you two years after writing the screenplay to set up a production deal. Why was it hard to find backers?

Partly it was because I was a first-time director whom nobody knew. Also, people told me that they wanted to make something more commercial. Before "Nine Queens", in Argentina if you wanted to make money with your film, you had to do a stupid comedy with television actors. "Nine Queens" proved that you could make a personal film, without big stars, which wasn't a comedy, and that it could still make a load of money and get good reviews.



What made Ricardo Darín and Gastón Pauls so suitable for their roles as the conmen?

Ricardo is nothing like [his character] Marcos in real life, but he has this charm, which makes you believe that he can smooth-talk somebody into something. He can switch in and out of comedy in one second, and he can change his look in one second because he's a great actor. Gaston, the younger guy, has this baby face which was perfect for Juan. There's a purity about him, something child-like.

How did you develop the screenplay, which is so intricately plotted?

I started out with a particular universe - that of the con-artists in Buenos Aires. Then I compressed the timeframe into just one day, because I wanted to make things easier for myself and to have less choices. Then I started to concentrate on these two characters, one who is the master, and one who is the pupil. And I followed them from scene to scene - it was almost like watching them. I only discovered the structure of the script after I completed it.

Bielinsky attributes the success of **Nueve Reinas**, in part, to praise by critics who say the film is "unlike any other Argentinian film. It is fast-paced with many surprising turns, no nudity and limited sex scenes, and there is nothing political and gory," says one viewer.

It also sounds as though Nine Queens is therefore also unlike most of the films made in Hollywood these days!

Iain McGlashan