

# Under the shadow of Cassavetes

Labyrinths in Lisbon - love stories, naturally...

It first premiered at the Lisbon Village Festival, a triumphant night. Commissioned by the event and made on digital video with almost no budget, the new Bruno de Almeida film made a very strong impression in an audience packed with the cinema community.

Then, the movie was blown up to 35mm and mixed on Dolby digital sound, the final touches needed for a much expected commercial release. A few days ago the movie played at the Fantasporto Film Festival and came back with the Special Jury Award. Now, there it is: a commercially release on a few selected screens across the country.

You need to go see it quickly, before it gets devoured by the market rules, which would be a nasty thing to happen.

The Lovebirds is a Portuguese movie like no other. Bilingual in it's cast and it's dialogue; more American than Portuguese in it's form; but not in it's tenderness; from New York - where the director lived more than twenty years and became a filmmaker - it brought the attitude of non conforming to the rules, either of the big industry that exist over there, or, the small one that exists here under the shadow of the government subsidies.

Bringing together Michael Imperioli, Joaquim de Almeida, Drena de Niro, Ana Padrão, John Ventimiglia, Rogério Samora, Nick Sandow, Johnny Frey, Fernando Lopes and a few more - even the magnate Joe Berardo - to appear in a single movie seems impossible, as it would seem impossible to shoot it in two weeks. Right? No, it's not. Bruno de Almeida proves it with this kaleidoscope of stories that take place in one night, in the port city by the Tagus River. Some dramatic, some comedic, some tough, some tender.

And my heart weeps, filling itself up and falling into the abyss - if a critic can quote the poet Cesário - for seeing Alfama rhyme with Cassavetes, in the love for the actors and for the moments, and for assuming that the perfection of the shot is not important, what matters is what pulses inside of us and what makes us tremble.

I'm not saying that The Lovebirds is a perfect movie - if ever there is one - I'm saying that it is a movie that breathes energy into the Portuguese cinema that it desperately needs (and how beautiful to see the complicity of Fernando Lopes when he says that to film is to resist and to survive). I'm saying that it entertains me, it moves me, it surprises me, it makes me want to see more movies from this filmmaker. The rest it's dust.

**Jorge Leitão Ramos**

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