

# Wild Tales/ Relatos Salvajes

(2014 , Damián Szifron , Argentina/Spain)

## Component 2: Global Filmmaking Perspectives (AL)

### Core Study Areas: Key Elements of Film Form Meaning & Response The Contexts of Film

### Rationale for study

- The literal translation of the film is '*Savage Tales*' which is probably a better description of this portmanteau film. Six different "deadly stories of revenge" play out in the setting of modern Argentina, each one concerning people who are goaded to release their primal instincts in often extreme acts of violence. Vicious, bloody and very funny this is a satirical and always entertaining black comedy of universal appeal "*we can all lose control*".

### STARTING POINTS - Useful Sequences and timings/links

- '*Las Ratas*'/'The Rats' - "*Everyone wants these guys to get what they deserve*". A customer enters a motorway restaurant at night and is recognised by the waitress as the loan shark who caused her father's suicide. She is prepared to serve him as usual but her fellow worker the cook decides to put rat poison on his eggs. 0:10:29 - 0:20:30
- '*La Bombita*' An explosions expert stopping on his way home to buy a birthday cake for his daughter finds his car towed away and comes up against a blank wall of bureaucracy. Trying to fight the system increasing frustration leads him to take drastic measures 0:38:52 - 1:01:46.

### CORE STUDY AREAS 1 - STARTING POINTS - Key Elements of Film Form (Micro Features)

#### Cinematography

- The cinematography by Javier Julia contrasts with each story. "The Rats" takes place in the interior of a roadside café at night. Contrast in lighting between the café itself, lit against the dark outside seen through the window. The lighting within the café distinguishes between the café itself (warm) and the kitchen with its cold blue light. As the contaminated food is brought out, the camera follows Cuenca and the plate. At the conclusion of the sequence there is a cut from the bloody body inside at night to the daylight the next morning, long shot as the police car drives the cook (Cocinera) away into the distance then an immediate cut to the next story '*El Más Fuerte*' with an empty road and a speeding car.
- '*El Más Fuerte*' is for most part a two handed story and the feeling of space and emptiness is emphasised by the travelling shots and the rugged scenery seen in long shot.
- '*Bombita*' begins in darkness but is linked to the previous section '*El Más Fuerte*' by an explosion that takes place near the beginning. '*Bombita*' is distinguished by its alternating interior/ exterior settings. Interiors of shops, Simón's home, and offices are preceded by long shots of buildings, parking lots, and the busy city.

#### Mise-en-Scène

- The opening pre-credit sequence "*Pasternak*" sets the black yet comic tone. The credits consist of a series of images of animals.
- When Cuenca is telling her story in "The Rats", Moza is in the background. The knife that Cocinera uses to cut up the chips is emphasised in close-up.
- In '*Bombita*' the city is crowded with buildings

and traffic. The parking administration offices have queues of people. In contrast the office building where Simón tries to get a job has long empty corridors.

### Editing

- Editing between sequences as well as within sequences.
- Conversations in two shot editing between Cuenca and Moza emphasises his behaviour towards her. His rage when she throws the food and the attack on him by Cocinera quickens the pace.
- *'Bombita'* in prison at the conclusion, Simón has become a hero to his wife, child and fellow prisoners. Cake, faces, reactions. Echoes the applause from colleagues for the explosion at the beginning of the sequence and also contrasts with his exclusion from the circle round the cake on his daughter's birthday.

### Sound

- Music by Gustavo Santolalla, theme over the credits. Background music used sparingly.
- The roadside café in 'The Rats' has rain falling outside.
- *'Bombita'* Sounds of the city traffic, sirens, horns. In the car on the way home after he has paid the parking fine the bland radio programme emphasises the reality of Simón's frustration. The glass that separates the public from the official distorts the conversations.

## CORE STUDY AREAS 2 - STARTING POINTS - Meaning & Response

### Representations

- *"Bastards rule the world"* - Argentinian society, ruling middle classes just out for themselves.
- Corrupt system, petty officials.
- Individuals have no real power and natural savage instincts make them lose control.

### Aesthetics (i.e. the 'look and feel' of the film including visual style, influences, auteur, motifs)

- Combination of the mundane and the extreme. Violence erupts but is so uncontrolled as to be comical.
- Argentine writer-director Damián Szifron has worked in TV. Sense of the absurd and the surreal within believable recognisable settings and with identifiable characters.

- Abuse of power takes different forms and links the tales.

## CORE STUDY AREAS 3 - STARTING POINTS - Contexts

### Social

- Argentinian social order, individuals are itching to take stand against a country that demonstrates both backward social constructs and bureaucratic hang-ups.

### Historical

- Economic decline halted but periods of inflation and uncertainty.

### Political

- Recent history in Argentina of Military Junta and the so called 'Dirty War'. Human rights violations, later investigation into War Crimes and 'The Disappeared' by the ruling military. Mistrust of officials and government in recent history.

### Technological

- Polished cinematography, editing and sound.

### Institutional

- Latin American cinema overshadowed and dominated by the Hollywood film industry. Three countries with a significantly developed film industry: Argentina, Mexico and Brazil. Film production in Argentina, supported by the State, is now one of the major film industries in the Spanish-speaking world. *Wild Tales* produced by Pedro and Augustin Almodóvar and their company El Deseo.