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Barroco Baroque Paul Leduc

Spain, 1989, 115 minutes
Colour/35mm
Production Company: Opalo Films/ICAIC/Quinto Centenario Production
Executive Producer: J. A. Perez Giner
Screenplay: José Joaquín Blanco, Jesús Díaz, Paul Leduc, based on "Concierto Barroco" by Alejo Carpentier
Cinematography: Angel Goded
Editor: Rafael Castanedo
Art Director: Julio Esteban
Principal Cast: Francisco Rabal, Angela Molina, Ernesto Gómez Cruz, Roberto Sosa, Alberto Pedro

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Paul Leduc's *Barroco*, like its immediate predecessor, the masterful *Frida*, is a film composed around the image, virtually erasing language from its structure. There is no dialogue, only a series of dreamlike tableaux, baroque evocations of a colonial past, full of objects and antiques, the clutter of tradition, overwhelming but useless. Evoking the extraordinary detail which one finds crowding the pages of Marquez's best work, Leduc quietly sets out on a trip through the imagery of Latin America. A man meditates in the half-dawn, at his side lies a music score, "Moctezuma — Storia per Musica". A Caribbean mulatto, who is his friend, major-domo, and accomplice, enters the film and we are transported into a carnivalesque assortment of scenes and images, often appearing irrational and unconnected. Dances and music add to the hypnotic spell which Leduc weaves around his material. Indians and blacks, slaves and colonizers play out their inevitable roles in a stylized pastiche of the history of the continent. Violence and torture combine with seduction and passion, hinting at the contradictory impulses which have driven the history of this great continent. And then in a leap forward, Leduc suggests that this legacy is visible in the present. *Barroco* is a visual poem, a delicate, probing tapestry which tries to create an imagery suggestive of the rich and disturbing tradition of Latin America.

Paul Leduc was born in Mexico in 1942. He studied architecture and theatre direction at the National University of Mexico, worked as a film critic for a number of periodicals, and then studied film at IDHEC in Paris. In 1967, he returned to Mexico and produced 17 documentaries for the Olympic Committee. Films include: *Reed: Insurgent Mexico* (73), *Ethnocide: Notes on Mezquite* (78), *Forbidden Stories* (79), *Petroleum Conspiracy: The Head of the Hydra* (81), *Frida* (85), *Barroco* (89).

Piers Handling



'Arab Arab Fadhel Jaibi, Fadhel Jaziri

Tunisia, 1988, 98 minutes

Colour/35mm

Production Company: Nouveau Film/I.M.F./

Carthago Film

Screenplay: Fadhel Jaibi, Fadhel Jaziri

Cinematography: Belgacem Jelliti

Editor: Arbi ben Ali

Art Director: Jaziri Jaibi

Sound: Hachemi Joulak

Music: Hammadi ben Othman

Principal Cast: Jalila Bakkar, Lamine Nahdi, Fadhel Jaziri, Zahira ben Ammar, Fathi El Haddaoui, Fatima ben Saidan

Print Source: Nouveau Film, 14, rue de Médine, Tunisia 1002. Tel: 289-310.

Foreign Sales Agent: Carthago Films, 9 avenue Hoche 75008 Paris, France. Tel: (1) 42-56-0045. Telex: 643845. Fax: (1) 45-63-6239.

As the distinguished Algerian critic Khemais Khayati puts it: "Arab has nothing to do with folklore, was not made to give anyone a good conscience, nor is it auto-flagellation in the face of Arab self-questioning in modern times. With perfect performances by six actors in a mature and major film, Arab is more than a map of the Arab soul, it's a tale where there is neither prince, nor princess, but simply the poetry of the apocalypse." Fadhel Jaibi and Fadhel Jaziri have based the film on their hit play (written in collaboration with its cast) and set it in the spacious ruins of the Saint Louis cathedral in Carthage. The locale is never specified, yet it is clear the church serves as a symbol for western civilization, and the film itself is the history of the Arab world. You will have to look for that history, however, by collaborating with the cast and directors, for nothing is given easily. Instead, there is a demanding narrative: a flight attendant has left Beirut and arrives at the church looking for her husband, who may be dead. She finds herself in a fortress under siege by a tribe which has usurped the water rights of Qouraich, the leader of a guerrilla group. The battle has taken its toll on Qouraich's sanity, and he is surrounded by a lost war photographer, a smitten groom, and two women — the mysterious Arbia and the timid Ousfour. Although its stage roots are not hidden, Arab is very much a film. It is unashamedly intellectual and challenging, but it rewards patient and attentive viewing.

David Overbey

Fadhel Jaibi was born in 1945. He is a playwright, screenwriter, director, and co-founder of the Nouveau Theatre in Tunis. Arab is his first feature film.

Fadhel Jaziri was born in 1948. He is an actor, director, and co-founder of the Nouveau Theatre in Tunis. Arab is his first feature film.