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The Mexican Mermaid

by Flick Chick Vique



Sea of Dreams fishes up 4 Red Vines for being a magical foreign experience in english.

It's a rare and wonderful thing to discover a new director. This week I had the pleasure of doing just that and I can't wait to share this amazing new talent with all of you. His name is José 'Pepé' Bojorquez. Remember that name because I am confident that someday everyone will know it and come to admire this creative dynamo.

It's no secret how much I love independent and foreign cinema. While the number one complaint I hear from those who don't attend these kinds of films is that they don't want to read subtitles, I say it is a small price to pay to be totally submersed in another culture. For those of us who can't afford to travel the world, we can still experience it firsthand in a first rate foreign film. Two films that I have encouraged you to see where you can do just that, have been Guillermo del Toro's *El Labertino del Fauno* and Pedro Almovódar's *Volver*, the first being a rich, surreal fantasy, the latter a colorful ode to the wonders and perils of being a woman. Bojorquez' *Sea of Dreams* brings together elements of both as it is a fantasy love story, that bursts upon the screen in brilliant rainbow shades. But the best part for you subtitle-phoebes is that this foreign film was shot entirely in English!

In *Sea of Dreams*, we follow the life of a young girl who washes ashore of a small Mexican fishing village. Long thought dead, she is greeted by her Grandmother, Godmother and the rest of the villagers with much joy and celebration. Her life appears to be blessed and her mere presence brings prosperity to all. She is simply enchanting, a quality that is not lost on the boys. But when tragedy strikes, she suddenly becomes an outcast until a mysterious stranger comes along to challenge the town's superstitious ways.

What unfolds is the most original love story I think I have ever seen. The story is so fresh, yet incorporates Mexican traditions and lore as old as the sea itself. There is magic in the air at every turn as Bojorquez explores the mysteries of life, love and destiny.

And if you are someone who likes subtext, Bojorquez layers metaphors like the many petticoats of a can-can dancer. It's no easy feat to keep track of it all when you are dazzled by such stunning beauty-not just from the surroundings but the cast itself!

Heading up those beauties is none other than the



LADIES ROOM LOWDOWN:

The screening I attended had an audience Q & A with José Bojorquez and his star Johnathon Schaech. What a treat that was! From it I learned that Bojorquez has been trying to get this film made and distributed for 10 years! We all owe him a debt of thanks for remaining true to his passion until he made his *Sea of Dreams* come true.

And as a side note, gorgeous Johnathon Schaech is just as chivalrous in person as he appears on film! In the midst of questioning he jumped up to help some women down the stairs from their seats. And they weren't some cute young things he was just trying to get close to! As the ex Mr. Christina Applegate I just have to ask, "What was she thinking to let him go?!"



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Brazilian Bombshell herself, Sônia Braga (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*)! As the Godmother/Earth Mother she is alternately sweet, sinister and always magnetic. Undoubtedly the real 'name' in the production for American audiences, Mexican audiences are treated to one of their true superstars in Angélica María. Though I myself was not familiar with her work, I can see why the actress has been such a popular fixture in Latin cinema. Veteran character actor, famous for his early work with John Cassavetes is Seymour Cassel (*Rushmore*) as Tomaso, a fiercely loyal 'familia' friend.

But it's the fresh faces that command the screen with acting talent that rivals their beauty. At the top of that list is newcomer Sendi Bar as the Mexican mermaid Grecia. She is absolutely luminous! Johnathon Schaech as the mysterious stranger Marcelo is hypnotic in his handsomeness! That he can act-and well-is a treat that seems too good to be true. And your heart will ache for equally gorgeous Nicholas Gonzalez (*The O.C.*) as Grecia's forbidden love, torn between jealousy, fear and undying passion.

Never has the screen been filled with so much beauty! From the faces of it's young international cast to the shores of Roca Partida and Tlacotalpan, *Sea of Dreams* is a riot of color and texture. This voluptuous tale of love and destiny is an embarrassment of riches compared to the dry as dust Hollywood romances. That it's the result of the fevered dreams of such a young director in his freshman effort is amazing and surreal in itself. I can't wait to see José Bojorquez' next project, but only after I feast on the buffet that is his *Sea of Dreams*, again and again!