

micro_scope

Les Films  Opale

DRUNKEN BIRDS

Directed by
Ivan Grbovic

Written by
Ivan Grbovic
Sara Mishara

with
Jorge Antonio Guerrero
Hélène Florent
Claude Legault
Marine Johnson

DISTRIBUTION - CANADA

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logline

Willy's quest to find his long-lost love Marlena has brought him from Central Mexico to Montréal, as a seasonal worker at the Bécotte farm. Multiple destinies intersect, moments of magic realism arise, worlds collide, and tensions swell amidst the long days of grueling physical labor.

synopsis

Marlena is the young wife of a powerful wealthy man in Mexico, Willy is her secret lover. Fearing the worst, the lovers will flee separately in the hopes of finding each other in a safer place. Willy suspects that Marlena is hiding in Montreal, so he escapes to Quebec where he is hired as a seasonal worker at the Bécotte Farm. While friendships are being forged between foreign workers on the farm, a gap is growing between the Bécotte family members. Willy, unknowingly, will arouse the desire in Julie, the wife of the owner. The situation will not be without consequences for the group - especially for her estranged teenage daughter Léa, who soon finds herself exploited after running away in search of freedom. Willy is accused of a crime he did not commit, which sends a ripple effect through the lives of all, leading to an eventual redemption.

Drunken Birds looks at the complex relationships between exploiters and the exploited.

cast list

Willy
Julie
Richard
Léa

Jorge Antonio GUERRERO
Hélène FLORENT
Claude LEGAULT
Marine JONHSON

Storyteller
Marlena
Lou
Benji
Formula One driver
Normand

Gilberto BARAZZA
Yoshira ESCÁRREGA
Amaryllis TREMBLAY
Maxime DUMONTIER
Karl WALCOTT
Normand D'AMOUR

crew list

Director
Screenwriters
Producers
Executive producer

Ivan GRBOVIC
Ivan GRBOVIC, Sara MISHARA
Luc DÉRY, Kim McCRAW
Nicolás CELIS

Casting director
Casting director (Mexico)

Nathalie BOUTRIE
Luis ROSALES

Cinematographer
Production designer
Costume designer
Hair and makeup artist

Sara MISHARA
André-Line BEAUPARLANT
Patricia McNEIL
Marie-Josée GALIBERT

1st assistant director
Line producer

Cédrick KLUYSKENS
Marie-Claire LALONDE

Postproduction supervisor
Editor
Sound engineer
Sound designer
Sound mixer
Colorist
Music composer

Érik DANIEL
Arthur TARNOVSKI, ACE
Stephen DE OLIVEIRA
Olivier CALVERT
Bernard GARIÉPY STROBL
Jérôme CLOUTIER
Philippe BRAULT

Production company
Distribution - Canada

micro_scope
Les Films Opale

Canada – 2021 – 104min – 35mm – 2.35 :1 – 5.1 – French and Spanish

IVAN GRBOVIC

director and co-screenwriter biography



Ivan studied at Concordia University and at the American Film Institute and started his career as a DOP shooting music videos before turning to film. He directed three short films which were well received in festivals: *La tête haute* (2006), *La chute* (2009) and *Les mots* (2009) His debut feature, *Romeo Eleven* (2011) received the prestigious Prize of the Ecumenical Jury in Karlovy Vary Film Festival. The film also won the Discovery Award in Namur. All four films were selected at the Toronto International Film Festival. *Drunken Birds* is his second feature.

filmography

La chute

2009 | short film | fiction | 16 minutes | 35mm | production: Jean-Luc Della Montagna

- ☐ TIFF 2009
- ☐ Nomination - Prix Jutra – Best short film

Les mots

2009 | short film | fiction | 13 minutes | 16mm | production: Paul Barbeau

- ☐ TIFF 2009

La tête haute

2006 | short film | fiction | 11 minutes | 35mm | production: Paul Barbeau

- ☐ TIFF 2006

Romeo Eleven

2012 | feature film | fiction | 90 minutes | 35mm | production: Paul Barbeau, Reprise Films

- ☐ Karlovy Vary International Film Festival - Oecumenical Award
- ☐ Festival International de Namur – Discovery Award, Best film
- ☐ Festival du Nouveau Cinéma - Prix Focus, Best Canadian Feature
- ☐ Festival d'Annonay - Grand Prix Jury, Best feature
- ☐ Thessaloniki International Film - Festival Human Values Award, Best feature
- ☐ St-Petersburg Film Festival – Best cinematography
- ☐ Festival of Tiburon - Fellini Prize - Best feature
- ☐ Festival of Monaco – Best feature, Best director, Meilleur actor (Joseph Bou Nassar)
- ☐ Jutra awards (2013), *nominated for : Best feature, Best director, Best screenplay, Best editor

Drunken Birds

2021 | feature film | fiction | 104 minutes | 35mm | production: micro_scope

SARA MISHARA

co-screenwriter and cinematographer biography



Sara Mishara is a cinematographer and screenwriter. She studied film at Concordia University and at the American Film Institute. She's a close collaborator of Maxime Giroux and Stéphane Lafleur. Her work as a cinematographer includes several outstanding feature films in Quebec: *Continental*, *a Film Without Guns*, *The Legacy*, *All That You Possess*, *You're Sleeping Nicole*, and *Félix and Meira*. *My Salinger Year*, her first collaboration with Philippe Falardeau, was the opening film at the Berlinale in 2020.

Often nominated at the Genies Awards, Jutra Awards and the Canadian Screen Awards, Sara Mishara won in 2019 a Canadian Screen Award and a Prix Iris for her work on *The Great Darkened Days*.

In 2011, she co-wrote *Romeo Eleven* with Ivan Grbovic. *Drunken Birds* is her second feature as a screenwriter.

interview with director IVAN GRBOVIC

Why Drunken Birds?

In 2005, I drove by Saint-Remi, Quebec, a small farming town outside of Montreal, while driving back from a film shoot. It was very foggy. Then suddenly, I saw a line of Mexican men in the fog, outside a bank.

The image was beautiful, intriguing, impossible. It felt like a dream.

I didn't know that migrant workers worked Canadian fields back then.

I hadn't yet watched Min Sook Lee's NFB documentary *El Contrato* (2003). That initial feeling of wonderment is the basis for the script.

The first draft is dated 2010.

Upon reading the script, Sara Mishara was inspired by the story and the next versions were co-written by the two of us.

It's your first film with micro_scope.

Luc Déry and Kim McCraw reached out after my first feature film - *Romeo Onze* - came out in 2011.

I think that Kim watched it on a plane so she was extra-moved by it :)

Jokes aside, I wanted to make something as ambitious as *Incendies* (2010) and Sara had shot several films for them already (for Stéphane Lafleur notably) so it was a good fit. In hindsight, I can't see anybody else producing this film.

Why the title "Drunken Birds"?

I don't think that I will ever be able to answer that question properly. Perhaps I'm asking the viewer to answer that question themselves.

For me, the characters are the "oiseaux ivres" (the drunken birds). They are soaring high but drifting. It also evokes bird migration. The seasonal movement from South to North and back again. And what happens when you can get lost in that journey. Willy was never supposed to meet the Bécotte family.

The film feels like a puzzle

Indeed, the scenes from the *Drunken Birds* are part of a puzzle. They all have a precise place, an idea to bring - they all fit together - but their sum doesn't offer an absolute answer, does not solve an ultimate enigma, except perhaps to confirm the strange beauty of chance and the absurdity of it all.

Can you talk a little bit about casting?

My first feature had lots of non-actors.

This time around, I wanted the opposite experience. I didn't write the film with an actor in mind, but when I saw Jorge Antonio Guerrero, I couldn't stop thinking about him for the role. He *was* Willy. I am grateful he accepted the part.

I was blessed to work with Hélène Florent and Claude Legault, two remarkable actors, cherished by Quebec's audience.

And Marine Johnson, a talented discovery, completed beautifully the family.

There's many languages in the film? Can you talk about that?

It's not a conscious decision. It's also the case in my first film, about a Lebanese-Canadian family living in Montreal. I think that it has to do with my upbringing. I'm a first-generation Serbian-Canadian, from a multi-cultural background. Hearing different languages is part of my experience and feels natural. It is also the reality in most multicultural cities everywhere. It's an opening to the world.

Obviously, images are very important.

I wanted to make a film imbued in magic light, in the tradition of Malick's *Days of Heaven* (1978). It was an important movie for me growing up. We shot most scenes at magic hour, laying tracks and rehearsing during the day, and waiting for the light to be just right. We shot in 35mm film with vintage anamorphic lenses from the 60s. Not "seeing" the final image while you're shooting only adds to the fleeting nature of the moment and to the overall magic of the process. This is as much Sara's film as mine. Her soul is in those images.

Can you tell us about your experience with Pimienta?

Their implication was very important for me and for my producers. Firstly, their notes on the script, and point of view on the content, especially in regards to the parts of the film that take place in Mexico and that deal with the migrant workers, was invaluable. They were also the guardians of the Spanish language in the film. Secondly, the participation of their team in the mexican portion of the shoot was amazing, They made it possible for us to work with very talented over there. I mean, they are the producers of *Roma*!

cast biography

JORGE ANTONIO GUERRERO

Role: WILLY



Jorge Antonio Guerrero studied psychological realism in CasAzul and took several workshops of improvisation and scenic creation at the Lake House and the FITU.

He has produced his own projects, one of the most representative being *Once Upon a Time Godínez*, a unipersonal act based on Kung Fu. For seven years he has practiced Kung Fu, this discipline has helped him to develop his spatial perception on stage. His relationship with lyrics has been influenced by poetry. Poetry has been a very important stimulus in many of its projects.

He participated in productions like *Luis Miguel, Falco, Besieged* among others. In theatre he participated in *The dinner or will come better times* with the group *Quienes* theatre. Without doubt his most important participation so far is the film *ROMA* by Alfonso Cuarón.

HÉLÈNE FLORENT

Role : JULIE



Since her graduation from the Conservatoire d'art dramatique de Québec in 2000, Héléne Florent had the opportunity to participate in several feature films such as *La lâcheté*, *Sarah préfère la course*, *Café de Flore*, *Les oiseaux ivres* and *Maria Chapdelaine*.

On television, she appeared in *La galère*, and later in the series *Lance et compte*, *Toute la vérité*, *Pour Sarah*, *La dérape*, *Unité 9* and *Eaux turbulentes*, to name a few.

Héléne has been the recipient of four Artis trophies in the Female Role: Television Series category, in addition to being nominated for four consecutive years in the Personality of the Year category. She has also been nominated in recent years at the Gemini Awards for her roles in *La dérape* and *Unité 9*. In 2012, the Vancouver Film Critics Circle Awards also presented her with an award in the Best Supporting Actress category for the feature film *Café de Flore*.

CLAUDE LEGAULT

Role : RICHARD



A star player in the National Improv League, Claude Legault has distinguished himself in television and film, both as an author and as an actor. On television, we have seen him in *Fatale Station*, *Un sur deux*, *Mon meilleur ami*, *450, chemin du Golf*, *Annie et ses hommes* and *Minuit le soir*. This series earned him three Gémeaux awards, including two as author. He shares these awards with Pierre-Yves Bernard, with whom he also wrote the television series *Dans une Galaxie près de chez vous*, in which he plays Flavien Bouchard. They later co-wrote the two films of the same name. Claude also wrote, in collaboration with Réal Bossé, the series *19-2*, in which he plays the role of Ben Chartier. For this series, he will win in 2011 and 2013, the statuette Artis for the male role in Quebec TV series and the Gemini award in 2013, for best text, drama series. We saw him in the TV series *Fugueuse I-II*, his role earned him a Gemini award for his interpretation, in *Cerebrum* and in *Appelle-moi si tu meurs*, the latter which he also co-wrote with Pierre-Yves Bernard. His film credits include *Gaz Bar Blues*, *French Kiss*, *L'Empire Bossé*, *PeeWee 3D*, *10* □ for which he was awarded Best Actor at the Jutra gala and *Pieds nus dans l'aube*. His participation in the *ByeBye 2018* and *2019* team was greatly appreciated by the public.

MARINE JOHNSON

Role : LÉA



The young and talented Marine Johnson has been a part of the cinematic industry of Quebec since 2012, when she took on the role of Sophie in the feature film *Ina Litovski*, by Anais Barbeau-Lavalette and André Turpin. At the young age of twelve, she received the UDA Award for Best Female Actress for that performance.

Marine has since studied dramatic art and performance at the Cegep Saint-Laurent, while maintaining her presence of the big screen. In 2016, she performs in *Y'est où le paradis?* a film by Denis Langlois. In 2017, she is Valerie in Sophie Lorain's *Charlotte a du fun*. That same year, she makes a memorable performance in *The Little Girl who was too Found of Matches*, directed by Simon Lavoie, and inspired by Gaétan Soucy's famous novel. In 2018, she is the running at the Canadian Screen Awards for Best Female Actress in a Lead Role, while also receiving a nomination at the Gala Québec Cinéma for Revelation of the Year. In the spring of 2019, Marine takes on the world of theatre and performs in *21*, a play written by Rachel Graton and directed by Alexia Burger on the stage of the Theatre d'Aujourd'hui. In 2020, she appears in the television series *Mon fils*, takes on the role of Mélanie in the cinematic adaptation of Geneviève Pettersen's novel *Goddess of the Fireflies*, directed once again by Anais Barbeau-Lavalette. In 2021, Marine has a lead role in *Bête Noire*, by Sophie Deraspe, a remarkable performance that leads to her recent Gemeaux Nomination.

the production company

micro_scope is one of the most important film production companies in Canada.

Founded in 2002, the company mainly focuses on the development and production of innovative and accessible feature films. Led by producers **Luc Déry** and **Kim McCraw**, micro_scope strives to make sure each of the company's films reaches its full potential.

All of micro_scope's 25 feature films have distinguished themselves in the most important film festivals in the world, notably in Cannes, Venice, Berlin, Locarno, Sundance and Toronto. Among them, *Incendies* (Denis Villeneuve) and *Monsieur Lazhar* (Philippe Falardeau) have been nominated for an Academy Award as Best Foreign Language Film.

SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

2020 : MY SALINGER YEAR – Philippe FALARDEAU

Berlinale : Opening Night Film

2015 : MY INTERNSHIP IN CANADA – Philippe FALARDEAU

Locarno International Film Festival : Piazza Grande

TIFF : Mention Best Canadian Feature Film

2013 : GABRIELLE – Louise ARCHAMBAULT

Locarno International Film Festival : Piazza Grande Audience Award

2013 : ENEMY – Denis VILLENEUVE

TIFF

San Sebastian Film Festival : Official Competition

2011 : MONSIEUR LAZHAR – Philippe FALARDEAU

Nominated in the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 2012 Oscars

Locarno International Film Festival : Audience Award / Variety Piazza Grande Award

TIFF : Best Canadian Feature Film Award

2010 : INCENDIES – Denis VILLENEUVE

Nominated in the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 2011 Oscars

Venice Days : Best Film Award

TIFF : Best Canadian Feature Film Award