

Cuban documentary Mafifa receives award at German film festival

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Illustrative image taken from Prensa Latina

Havana, May 11 (RHC)-- The documentary 'Mafifa', by Cuban filmmaker Daniela Muñoz Barroso, won the audience award at the CineLatino Tuebingen 2023 Festival in Germany, the event's official website reported Thursday.

With venues in the city of the same name and in the cities of Stuttgart, Freiburg and Reutlingen, the event, which took place from May 3 to 10, is considered the biggest platform for Ibero-American cinema in

the German nation.

The 2021 work narrates the filmmaker's trip to the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba on the trail of Mafifa, an enigmatic woman whose life story intertwines with that of the young filmmaker.

Gladys Esther Linares, her real name, played the bell, a metal percussion instrument used by men in the famous Conga de los Hoyos, one of the most famous traditional expressions of carnival tradition in Cuba.

The sound of the bell cannot be heard by Daniela, who suffers from hearing loss, so the inquiry into Gladys - overcoming a man's world and dying at a young age - makes her question convictions and confront fears.

In 77 minutes, the director moves with the camera between the past and the present, musical, harsh and sometimes raw, of the protagonist; at other times the lens looks and listens to the filmmaker, while the environment, the sounds, become her language to convey her vision of the world.

Muñoz Barroso is not a native of Santiago de Cuba, so the conga, the rhythm and the passion it reaches in that city, is for her a new phenomenon. But it is from there, amidst the drums, sweat and dance, from the strong Caribbean heat, that she discovers Mafifa and rediscovers herself.

Film critic Allan Hunter wrote about the work on the Screendaily site: "An unusual and welcome example of biographical documentary whose own style lives up to the radical and unorthodox example of its subject matter. It irresistibly plugs the viewer into the frenetic world of Cuban conga music".

In addition to directing the film, Muñoz Barroso was in charge of cinematography and production along with Leila Montero, while the also young Joanna Montero did the editing and Glenda L. Martínez was the sound designer.

The feature film is a production of Estudio ST, with a script by Daniela, Carlos Melián and Joanna Montero, also narrated by its director.

'Mafifa' was selected to make its premiere in the Luminous section of the IDFA Festival (2021), one of the most important documentary film events in the world.

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