

Fernando Eimbcke telephone interview on the occasion of the UK release of *Lake Tahoe*.

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Patrizia Raeli, Director, Yume Pictures

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1. *Lake Tahoe* story's tone conveys beautifully dramatic elements with a touch of comic tones. Was it difficult to translate this into a film?

FE: It wasn't really difficult to translate these two elements, the dramatic part and the funny part, because I think that is the way life is. When you have lost someone, like a parent, life remains the same, life doesn't change; there are still funny things happening around you. It's the natural course of life. So yes, it wasn't difficult.

Plus, I'm not too keen on films where everything is so dramatic and intense. For me, that is some kind of a lie, because life is not like that. Life is painful but also very funny.

In all parts of life, there always are both funny things and sad things. So, if you make a comedy and you only put in funny things, it will become very, very simplistic.

Comedy also has many painful aspects to it. In fact, it is the most important thing of comedy; you want to see the characters suffering. If you see a film from Charlie Chaplin, it is a comedy, but the character is suffering a lot. I think that is very natural, if there is pain there is also joy.

2. *Lake Tahoe* won numerous prizes, among them the prestigious FIPRESCI and 3 Mexican Arieles. How much did these awards mean to you?

FE: That kind of recognition makes me very happy. I feel happy for the film and for the people who worked on it, because it is some kind of recognition. But I feel that the most important award is to see the finished film on the screen. If you like your film and feel proud about it, that's the biggest reward. The awards make me happy but films are not like football, not to prove who the best one is. Films are very dissimilar; my films are different from other films and if another one won an award, that does not make my film worse. It's just different.

Awards are strange; they are some kind of system that you accept when you send a film to a festival with a competitive section. It's some kind of game but I don't believe too much in awards. You can win a lot of awards but it takes a long time to know if the film is really good or not. You won't know for 20 or 30 years if a film is really a good, not because it won an award. But I appreciate awards a lot. They make me feel happy because we worked hard to make the film.

3. *Will we be able to see this beautiful film in UK?*

FE: Yes, the Film will open in the UK on the 26<sup>th</sup> June. Please check the details of the cinemas and time schedule on the Mexican Website.

4. *The location of the film is very distinctive, showing an extract of real life in a small Mexican village, which at the same time is very universal in its setting. Were there certain aspects that you particularly wish to emphasise?*

FE: I think that the town, Progreso, had a very special mood, a special atmosphere, which reflected in the film. I liked that atmosphere a lot. If we had chosen Mexico City as a location it would have been a different story.

5. *One subject that seems close to your heart is adolescence and coming to age, which was also in your previous film TEMPORADA DE PATOS. Could you tell us how the other characters relate, and personal stories intersect with the life of the character played by Diego to create such precise composition?*

FE: I'm not obsessed with teenagers; I think that all human beings are like teenagers. All of us are really confused and if you say you're not, you are lying because we all are.

At some point, we turn into people who can buy a home, a car and have important things to do, but we remain like teenagers. We are lost all our lives.

There is this character Don Hever in Lake Tahoe, who is 70 year old. He is alone, he feels lost, he is asking himself questions and he has conflicts.

The character in Duck Season, the pizza delivery guy, is not a teenager but he acts like one, even more than the younger characters in the film, although they are not aware of this. So I think all of us are like teenagers. We assume that we grow up, but I don't see it like that.

6. *Could you tell us something about your actors and especially Diego Cataño, with whom you have worked previously?*

FE: I didn't visualise the casting beforehand. When we started the casting process, that took about four months, a lot of people asked me why I didn't approach Diego. I didn't want to because I was afraid I was going to repeat myself. We selected a boy for the role and even reached the wardrobe process, but just before the shooting, I saw that the boy wasn't my main character. I called Diego and Alexis Zabe', the director of photography of the film. He had been with Diego two months before and he had made some photos. When I saw these, I called Diego and I asked him to help me, even though I didn't cast him yet. I asked him to take a plane to Progreso and once he arrived, we started shooting the film.

He is a great actor. He is very young, but at the same time very mature. I like his way of acting a lot. He is very generous because he believes that if the character in front

of him exist, he can exist. That's the only way he can perform as a character and that is very difficult to find in an actor, because the most actors want to exist in their own right.

Furthermore, Diego is always concerned with everything, but not in a selfish way. He is very kind to everyone on the set. He is a great actor and also a very good friend.

### *7. Is this a film about loss or escape?*

FE: About an escape. This is a very organic film because the character is running away from reality. When I was shooting the film I felt like I didn't want to do it. There were many attempts to call off the project. I mean many! On one hand, I thought, I'm not going to do it, and in some other way I was still there. I was very lucky to have the support of the people that worked in the film, like Jaime Ramos (executive producer) and Christian Valdelievre (producer) or Alexis Zabe' (cinematographer)... they were like the characters that surround the character of Juan, who is running away.

I remember being with Jaime Ramos, and telling him about my doubts and he said "you are not going to decide, the film will decide. If you have to, you will do the film, and if you don't then, it won't be done". And the film was completed. There was no way of escaping from the film.

It was a very painful process. I feel very proud of the film, I enjoy watching it and seeing that it transmits honesty. It may be that the film is liked or not, but it has a very special honesty. As I said, it's a very honest film, made for, well for us really. That is very risky when you question if cinema is made for the spectator. I think you can't make films for all sorts of spectators that will lack respect. I can't guess their taste. You cannot merge all sorts of tastes, which is what television does and films which are aimed only to sell. They homogenize people's taste and I believe that is not on. This film moves me and I have a deep respect for the film and for myself as a spectator. I cannot get into the spectator's head and tell what he/she like, but I can get into my head and therefore I can make a film that I enjoy and respect.

### *8. Are there directors that have influenced your work or that you admire?*

FE: Definitely Ozu and apart from him, Bresson and De Sica. They are like the Trinity for me. I am still studying Ozu and Bresson. Right now not De Sica but I saw *Bicycle Thieves* about fifty times. But there is so much to learn from these filmmakers.

As a filmgoer, I like to see a film many times. For example Robert Bresson's *A Man Escaped*; I saw that film on video a lot of times before I went to the Cinemateque in Mexico and saw it in 35mm. That was one of the most beautiful experiences in my life. I love that kind of films.

### *9. Can you tell us about the title of the film?*

FE: *Lake Tahoe* is the place where the characters escape. It's like an imaginary place. It's the place of which Juan's brother imagines they have been there. It's a metaphor of the family denying the death of the father.

The character of Juan's brother is denying reality. In his fantasy, he has been there; he invents his own story and he wants to believe the father didn't die. But Juan tells him: no, we never went to Lake Tahoe and our father is dead. That's life, that's reality and we must live with that.

*10. What are you working on at the present?*

FE: I am finishing a short film that will be part of a port-manteau film called *Revolution*, which is being made to celebrate the centenary of the Mexican Revolution next year. I was invited by Canana and IMCINE to make a 10 minute short film to be part of this. Among the other directors will be Carlos Reygadas, Amat Escalante, Rodrigo Plá, Patricia Riggen, Gerardo Naranjo, and Diego Luna.

And I am happy with my film, because I had the opportunity to experiment, to try new things. For the first time, I used a hand held camera and I am happy and proud of the short film.