

ALDEMAR
CORREA

ANA
DE LA REGUERA

ANGELICA
BLANDON

MARGARITA
ROSA DE FRANCISCO

JOHN
LEGUIZAMO

DIRIGIDA POR SIMON BRAND

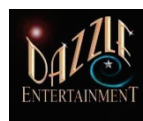


Peor que amarte es buscarte.

PARAISO PICTURES presenta PARAISO TRAVEL en asociación con GRAND ILLUSIONS ENTERTAINMENT
 ALDEMAR CORREA ANA DE LA REGUERA ANGELICA BLANDON con MARGARITA ROSA DE FRANCISCO y la participación especial de JOHN LEGUIZAMO
 basada en la novela Paraiso Travel de JORGE FRANCO música original ANGELO MILLI música adicional SIGUR ROS canción original FONSECA
 supervisión musical LYNN FAINCHEIN vestuario SANDRA CAMACHO editor ALBERTO DE TORO diseño de producción MIGUEL ANGEL ALVAREZ
 director de fotografía RAFA LLUCH consigliere MAURICIO KASSIN productores asociados ALBERTO CHEHEBAR ROBERT CHEHEBAR ROY AZBUT
 co-productores JOHN LEGUIZAMO JUAN SANTIAGO RODRIGUEZ productores ejecutivos JONATHAN SANGER ED ELBERT SARAH BLACK JORGE PEREZ
 producida por SANTIAGO DIAZ JUAN RENDON ISAAC LEE ALEX PEREIRA guión JUAN RENDON JORGE FRANCO
 dirigida por SIMON BRAND



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Introduction to Film & Offering

With wins at all the major Latin festivals, box office records, coverage in over **30 national publications** and anticipation from the U.S. Hispanic community, *Paraiso Travel* (\$4.7MM budget) is positioned to be the **Latin genre's premiere film of 2009**. Dazzle is pleased to exclusively represent this exciting film and to offer you the opportunity to acquire the domestic distribution rights. Currently, all rights (theatrical, home entertainment, digital, television and ancillaries) are available for both the U.S. and Canadian market. Additional information can be provided on international rights at your request.

The following provides you with a brief overview of Paraiso Travel and the incredible momentum that the film has already generated in the press, festivals and the U.S. Latin community in general. Trailers for the film, a full list of festival awards, recent press coverage, key art, talent profiles and an electronic press kit can be found on our interactive website at <http://paraiso.dazzleentertainment.com> and will provide you with a wealth of additional details about the project.

Our goal is to acquire a single partner to distribute the film for a limited and targeted theatrical release as well as release of the film to the home entertainment marketplace. The producer's are also prepared to execute the theatrical release of the film independently and securing a distributor for DVD and other ancillary rights if that model is preferred. Domestic television rights can also be either included or excluded depending on the preferences of our distribution partner.

Synopsis

Adapted from Jorge Franco's acclaimed novel of the same name, *PARAISO* is the story of Marlon Cruz (**Aldemar Corea**), a young Colombian man who, motivated by his girlfriend Reina (**Angelica Blandon**) leaves his comfortable life in Medellin and flees with her through Guatemala and Mexico, across the borders, illegally into the United States. Marlon's journey, which takes him through seedy strip clubs, dance halls, homeless hostels, and the streets of Jackson Heights, ultimately takes him to a place he could not have predicted.

With **dialogue in both Spanish and English** (along with appropriate subtitles in both languages) and several genre and non-genre specific festival wins/appearances under its belt *PARAISO* has demonstrated its **appeal to both Latin and Non-Latin audiences**.

Cast & Crew

The film stars such talented actors as Emmy Award winning / Golden Globe nominated John Leguizamo (*Casualties of War*, *Thanks for Everything!*, *Julie Newmar*, *Carlito's Way*, *Spawn*, *Moulin Rouge*, *Collateral Damange*, *Assault On Precinct 13*) and Hollywood's new Latin promise, Ana de la Reguera (*Nacho Libre*, *Ladie's Night*, *A Beautiful Secret*, MTV Movie Award for Best Actress and Silver Goddess Award winner), as well as Colombia's well-known actress Margarita Rosa de Francisco (known throughout the Latin market for her role as Gaviota in the long running TV soap "Café con Aroma de Mujer"). As evidenced

by the impressive list of “wins” at the major Latin film festivals (e.g., LA Latino Film Festival, Latin Film Festival) and critical acclaim it has received in over 100 national publications from screenings at non-Latin festivals such as Tribeca, it is clear that this blend of known star power and the talented young rising stars is a success. As Time magazine said:

“What distinguishes the film is its entrancing, flesh-and-blood glimpse into the quirky, angst ridden workings of the indocumentado world... It’s a milieu ripe with characters like a stuttering S&M photographer played with delightful understatement by Golden Globe nominee John Leguizamo (To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar); and a gorgeous street vendor and aspiring salsa singer played by Ana de la Reguera (Jack Black’s heartthrob in Nacho Libre).” – Time Magazine, Mar 11, 2008.

This successful formula is in large part due to the influence and skill of acclaimed Director, Simon Brand and the guidance of the film’s Executive Producers whose credits include Mission Impossible 2, Vanilla Sky, The Producers, Anna & The King to name just a few. Simon has been recognized as one of the most important in a new wave of Latin film-makers that include the likes of Alfonso Cuarón, Walter Salles, Fernando Meirelles, Alejandro Amenabar and Alejandro González Iñárritu. No wonder he was named one of the fifty most influential people in the Latin American entertainment world by Variety magazine. Brand has also won MTV, Clio, Tell and Fiap awards and been nominated for a Grammy for his prior work directing and producing music videos (which he began at the age of 17).

Additional cast and crew information can be found in Attachment 2 or at our interactive web page at <http://paraiso.dazzleentertainment.com>. While we will be sending you a screener in the mail, you can view a highlight reel of the film on that same web page.

Theatrical Releases

Paraiso Travel has only been released theatrically in Colombia. As of mid-December, the film remains the box office leader for the year in that market (selling almost 1,000,000 tickets and generating just over \$4.5MM in box office receipts from 80 prints) and #3 top grossing film of all time in Colombia. This incredible success has generated tremendous momentum for the film within Latin America as well as within the U.S. market. The film has also been scheduled for release in Mexico and Spain for March and April respectively. Mexican theatrical release can be delayed by several months to synchronize its release with the U.S. market if that is desired.

While the producer’s would prefer to select a single partner for both the theatric and non-theatrical releases of the film, they are also prepared to divert funds to execute a limited, independent release of the film in advance of the DVD releases. For this reason, distributor’s offers may be for all domestic rights or for home entertainment only.

Festivals, Press & Market Momentum

Since its debut at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival, Paraiso Travel has enjoyed a tremendous ground swell of interest from both the Latin entertainment and non-Latin film entertainment community as well as with U.S. and worldwide Latin consumers.

The film has received attention from over 30 national publications including Time magazine and the Los Angeles Times. Early discussions with Latin media giant Univision (which controls over 90% of Latin broadcasts in the U.S.) have been encouraging with plans being formulated for aggressive editorial

support and appearances by the film's main talent. Talent would also be made available to support PR activity related to your distribution of the film theatrically and/or on DVD.

Paraiso Travel's gripping story line, superior acting and strong production values have been recognized by excited audiences worldwide earning the film nine awards (including four audience awards) at a number of influential festivals such as the L.A. Latino Film Festival, the Latino Film Festival (San Francisco), Huelva (Spain), Cancun (Mexico) and Ft. Lauderdale.

Additional Resources & Follow-up

Once again, additional information on the film can be found in the attachments that follow as well as on our <http://paraiso.dazzleentertainment.com> web page.

We will also be following up within the next several days to discuss this project in more detail however, in the interim, please feel free to contact David Vasile by emailing dvasile@dazzleentertainment.com or by calling either 310-855-3510 (office) or 310-591-9982 (cell).



Attachment One – Assets, Deliverables, Clearances & Title

A clear chain of title and all requisite licenses, releases and clearances have been secured and can be demonstrated. All assets are well organized and readily accessible.

Please note that Paraiso Travel was shot on film and not digitally.

In addition, the producers have 60 prints available from the theatrical distribution of the film in Colombia. While these prints will need to be cleaned, they can be utilized in the U.S. reducing overall print costs.

A theatrical trailer, highlight reel and poster art have been created to support the theatrical release within Latin America and, while they may require re-purposing, their underlying elements can be made available to you.



Attachment Two – Cast & Crew Bios

SIMÓN BRAND - Director

Simón Brand began his career more than 15 years ago in Bogotá, when he directed his first musical video for a local rock band at the age of 17. This marked the start of a successful film-making career that includes over 100 music videos and 150 television commercials, for Coca-cola, Nabisco, Unilever, Pepsi, Toyota, BMW and others.

He has filmed on all the continents, showing his creative vision and raising his level among his colleagues to the point where Gatopardo magazine has designated him one of the fifty most influential people in the World of Latin American entertainment.

Simón Brand has won MTV, Clio, Telly and FIAP awards, and has been nominated for numerous Grammy awards. He has worked with megastars such as Enrique Iglesias, Shakira, Juanes, Thalía, Jessica Simpson, Chayanne and Alejandro Fernández, and many more.

Eleven years after starting his own production company, Kree8 Productions, in Miami he was ready to fulfill the dream of a lifetime and make his own full length feature film. He moved to Los Angeles where he discovered the script for his first film and made his debut as a film director with *Unknown (Mentes en Blanco)*.

The project developed for two years with producer Rick Lashbrook and the dream became an incredible and powerful experience, a film with a cast that included great actors like Jim Caviezel, Greg Kinnear, Barry Pepper, Joe Pantoliano, and Jeremy Sisto.

Paraiso Travel, his second film is more than an adaptation of a successful novel. It is the production of a top quality motion picture using every technical and technological resource.

JORGE FRANCO - Author and Screenplay

Born in Medellín (Colombia), Franco is considered a leader in the new wave of Latin American literature. He has frequently been compared to the Colombian Nobel prize- winning author Gabriel García Márquez, who in his turn admires Franco's work and calls him the most brilliant writer of our times.

He studied Film direction and production at the London International Film School and literature in Colombia. In 1996, *Viaje Gratis*, a short story by Franco made it to the finals of the Carlos Castro Saavedra VII short story contest and that same year won the national prize for narrative Pedro Gómez Valderrama, with his collected stories titled *Maldito Amor*. In 1997 his novel *Mala Noche* won the national prize for novels given in Pereira.

His previous book, *Rosario Tijeras* (1999), besides winning the prestigious Dashiell Hammet prize in Spain in 2001, sold out the entire first edition a week from its launching. This book was made into a movie in a co-production with Mexico, Brazil and Spain, and broke box office records.

JUAN RENDÓN - Screenwriter and Producer

Rendón co-scripted his first film, *Paraíso Travel*. Before making films full time, Rendón was the editor-in-chief of the award-winning magazine LOFT, which focuses on Latin American lifestyles and those of Hispanics living in the United States. During his period as editor, Rendón interviewed figures like the environmental scientist James Lovelock, the editor Benedikt Taschen, the architect Cesar Pelli, the photographer David LaChapelle, film maker Arturo Ripstein, screenwriter Guillermo Arriaga (*Amores Perros*, *21 Grams*), and others. Juan finished his studies at Duke University with a double major, in economics and visual arts. He was born in Colombia and now resides BETWEEN New York AND MIAMI

JOHN LEGUIZAMO (Roger Peña)

Born July 22, 1964 in Bogotá (Colombia), John Leguizamo has lived in the United States since 1970 when his family moved to New York. He was always interested in acting and enrolled in the Lee Strasberg Institute and N.Y.U. Leguizamo's fame derives from Off-Broadway theatre performances, especially thanks to *Mambo Mouth*, where he placed seven different roles. He also worked on television (in 1984 he worked in several episodes of *Miami Vice*) and made his film debut in 1985 in a small role in Paul Morrissey's *Sangre y Salsa*.

Later he met Brian de Palma for the first time in his war film *Casualties of War* (1989). In 1994 he married the actress Yelba Osorio, with whom he had worked in 1991 in *Atrapado por su pasado* (1991) and *The Pest* (1997). In 1996 they were divorced. His second wife is production assistant Justine Maurer, whom he married in 1999. In 1996, he was nominated for a Golden Globe as Best Supporting Actor in *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar*. In 1998, he won an Emmy for his work on a variety show called *Freak*. Some of his most recent work: the re-make of *Assault on Precinct 13* (2005) and *Land of the Dead* (2005), a zombie movie by George A. Romero.

Filmography:

Sangre y Salsa (1985), *Casualties of War* (1989), *Revenge* (1990), *La jungla 2 (alerta roja)* (1990), *El cazador callejero* (1990), *Gentile Alouete* (1990), *Hangin' with the Homeboys* (1991), *Buscando Justicia* (1991), *Regarding Henry* (1991), *Veneno* (1991), *Whispers in the Dark* (1992), *Super Mario Bros.* (1993), *Carlitos'Way* (1993), *Night Owl* (1993), *A Pyromaniac's Love Story* (1995), *To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995), *Executive Decision* (1996), *The Fan* (1996), *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), *The Pest* (1997), *Beso de hermano* (1997), *Spawn* (1997), *Actores Asesinos* (1998), *Body Count* (1998), *Joe the King* (1999), *S.O.S. Summer of Sam* (1999), *King of the Jungle* (2000), *What's the Worst that Could Happen?* (2001), *Moulin Rouge* (2001), *Ice Age* (2002) – voice, *Collateral Damage* (2002), *Zigzag* (2002), *Empire* (2002), *Spun* (2002), *Sueño* (2004), *Crónicas* (2004), *Assault on Precinct 13* (2005), *Land of the Dead* (2005), *Ice Age 2* (2006) –voice-, *The Groomsmen* (2006).

ANA DE LA REGUERA (Milagro)

Ana de la Reguera is one of the most important actresses in Mexico and now, following her first Hollywood production, *Nacho Libre* (2006), is very promising in the United States. Her impressive artistic career includes *Así del precipicio* (2006), and *Por la libre* (2000).

She acted in *A Beautiful Secret* in 2002, with Kathy Jurado, the Oscar-nominated actress. In 2003, she acted one of the principal roles in *Ladies' Night*. It was a box office success that year and Ana won three important awards: Favorite Actress, MTV Movie Awards, Best Actress of the Year, Canacine, and the Silver Goddess Award for best actress in a supporting role.

Ana has one of the most recognized faces in Hispanoamérica. She has participated in many television programs including the MTV Movie Awards. She is one of the young Latina American film and television stars. Anabell Gaurdoqui De La Reguera was born in Veracruz, Mexico on April 8, 1977.

MARGARITA ROSA DE FRANCISCO (Raquel)

This Colombian actress is one of the biggest stars in Colombia and Latin America. A television program launched her into stardom: *Cafe, With an Aroma of a Woman*, a soap opera seen around the world and which has been re-made many times. She has been seen more recently in Colombia as the Master of ceremonies in the reality shows *Challenge 2004* and *The Robinson Expedition*. *La Caponera* and *La Madre*, are two of the important shows in which she has acted. In motion pictures, her work in *Fidel* (2001) and *Ilona llega con la Lluvia* (1995) stand out. Her residencies in both Spain and Mexico have achieved international recognition for her.

ALDEMAR CORREA (Marlon)

This young Antioquian actor has dedicated the greater part of his artistic life to the stage, outstanding for his work in: *Ensayo de luces*, *El Balcón*, *Severa Vigilancia*, *El Monte Calvo y Caricias*. He has worked in Colombian television in *Regreso a la esperanza*, *Dora la celadora* and *Vuelo 1503*. His performance as Marlon Cruz in the film *Paraíso Travel* earned him the award as Best New Actor in the International Film Festival of Puerto Vallarta, in México.

ANGELICA BLANDON (Reina)

Coming from a family of actresses, Angélica has dedicated the greater part of her career to the stage and was one of the child actors on *Okidoki* and as an adult was seen recently in television productions of *Vuelo 1503*, *No renuncies Salomé*, *Tan cerca y tan lejos* and hosted the children's show on *Caracol TV*, *Anime Express*.



Attachment Three – About PARAISO TRAVEL

(by author Jorge Franco)

When *Paraiso Travel* was published in 2001, many readers felt it was ready for adaptation to the movies. Even though it was written in strictly literary terms, the book was full of visual elements, with a plot that enticed the reader to read to the end and covered subject matter that was interestingly up-to-date and which carried social significance.

As the author, for me *Paraiso Travel* was also a story about obsessive love, growth and learning. A tale of dreams, of the “American dream”, that led two young Colombians to seek a better future in the United States, to lose themselves in the effort to find it and to meet, at last, disappointed in one another in the midst of a foreign culture, where the one clear fact was that it is only a small step between a dream and a nightmare.

Although the film adaptation was not as simple as many readers had thought it would be, after many revisions we managed to incorporate Marlon’s despair of getting lost into the script, as well as his intense search for Reina and the agony experienced in the infamous crossing through Central America to reach the Mexican frontier and finally cross that longed-for border. The characters came alive in the actors whose work stands out marvelously under Simón Brand’s precise direction.

I know for a fact that Simon had the film in his mind since he had first read the book when it was published. Having carried the story in his thoughts for so many years, the results could be only an impeccable, carefully-made, and internationally acceptable production where the raw realities and poetic images are beautifully combined. The producers as well as the entire production team made sure there would be top quality in every detail both in Colombia and in New York.

Today, years after the beginnings of this film adaptation, those of us who deposited all our efforts in *Paraiso Travel* are sure we have made a dream come true and have crossed a frontier, but unlike the film characters, the dreams are our own and the frontiers are those of art, which has no walls and demands no immigration papers.



Attachment Four – Producer Bios

ALEX PEREIRA – Producer

Although born in Colombia, Alex Pereira spent his early years in Los Angeles, California, where he worked as a Junior Agent in ICM (International Creative Management), one of the most powerful and respected talent agencies in the World, for three years. There he learned the entertainment industry and collaborated in projects like the *Lord of the Rings* (trilogy), *Moulin Rouge* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. ICM has one of the most important groups of talent in Hollywood, including stars like Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Denzel Washington, and Richard Gere. Some of its best production clients are among the Oscar winners for direction, cinematography, production and edition.

Seeking to become a producer, he left ICM to work closely with one of the best Hollywood managers, who has among his clients Kevin Spacey and Michael Chiklis (*The Shield*). At Joanne Horowitz Management he handled daily responsibilities for publicity requests, script proposals, project monitoring and development of feature films for Kevin Spacey's production company. Today he is a founding member and administrator of Paraíso Pictures, building a bridge between Hollywood and the Hispanic market.

SANTIAGO DÍAZ – Producer

In 1995, Santiago Díaz began his postgraduate studies in film direction and production in New York. After graduation in 1996, he was contracted by Prego Television, in Bogotá, Colombia. He assumed the responsibility, as executive producer, of leading the large but newly created production company for commercial publicity in the nation. His work has taken him to many of the Andean and Caribbean nations where he has produced hundreds of commercials and other audiovisual projects. He has worked with publicity for clients such as Nestlé, Coca-Cola, Sprite, Toyota, Renault and Sony Music, learning about the Latin American film industry through this direct contact.

In July of 2000, he was HIRED by the Spanish production company Trivisión, to produce a full-length feature film *Severo Ochoa, La Conquista de un Nóbel* in New York. He also produced Colombian director Sergio Cabrera's documentary film about the life of the notorious Colombian narcotics trafficker Pablo Escobar. He founded Spots Inc, a commercial production company based in Miami and Los Angeles, which represents some of the most sought-after directors of commercial publicity in the world to produce commercial messages. Two of his directors have won the Leon de Oro award, at Cannes, for Best Commercial of the Year.

JONATHAN SANGER - Executive Producer / Partner and General Co-Director, GI

Producer of *The Producers* – The Musical (based on the Broadway musical by Mel Brooks) which finished filming in May, 2005 for Universal Pictures (US) and Sony Pictures (abroad). The cast included the original stage actors Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick, Uma Thurman and Will Ferrell.

In 1978, Jonathan Sanger debuted as a producer after winning the interest of Mel Brooks' new production company, Brookfilms Ltd., with a "small" film directed by David Lynch in England. *The Elephant Man*, a moving story filmed in black and white with actors John Hurt and Anthony Hopkins, had a major impact both on the public and the film critics earning eight Oscar nominations in 1980, among them Best Picture. It won the British Academy's Best Picture and the French Cesar award.

Sanger's next project as a producer was the exciting story of the actress Frances Farmer, *Frances*, with Jessica Lange, Kim Stanley and Sam Shepard. Lange was nominated for the Oscar for Best Actress and Stanley for Best Supporting Actress. C/W Productions invited Jonathan to join them, and he supervised production of the film *Mission Impossible II*. In 2000, he produced (with Ed Elbert) his first large format film (IMAX), *NSYNC, Bigger Than Live*, a concert movie of the most popular pop music group in the United States.

In 2001, he produced *Vanilla Sky*, for Paramount, with Tom Cruise and Penélope Cruz, written and directed by Cameron Crowe. In 2003, he produced *Suspect Zero* for Paramount and Tom Cruise's production company, C/W Productions, with Aaron Eckhart, Ben Kingsley and Carrie Ann Moss.

ED ELBERT - Executive Producer / Partner and General Co-director, GI

He produced *The Martian Child*, based on a short story by David Gerrold, winner of the Hugo, Nebula and Focus prizes, about a single father who adopts a problematic child from the foster home system. The film was financed and distributed by New Line Pictures and finished the main takes in Vancouver, B.C., Canada. Actors were John Cusack, Amanda Peet, Joan Cusack, Angelica Huston and Sophia Okonedo, (an Oscar nominee for her role in *Hotel Rwanda*).

Ed produced and co-created *Anna and the King* for Twentieth Century Fox with Oscar winner Jodie Foster and the Asiatic super-star Chow Yun-Fat. The film opened in December, 1999 and was nominated for two Oscars and two Golden Globes.

His first partner was Jonathan Sanger in the production of *NSYNC, Bigger Than Live*, a concert film in large format (IMAX) with the pop music group most popular in the world at that time. He was Marketing Vice-president for Robert Altman's production company, Lionsgate Films (not related to the current Lions Gate), at the time when films like *A Wedding* were premiering.

SARAH RYAN BLACK - Executive Producer / Senior Vice-president and Partner, GI

Between 1981 and 1986, she was Development Director for A&M Films where she helped create the film division of A&M Records. There she developed and participated in productions like *Birdy*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Bring on the Night*, *Better Off Dead*, and *One Crazy Summer*.

From 1986 to 1988, as Vice-president for development with Wildwood Films, she worked and did re-writes during the making of *The Milagro Beanfield War* with Robert Redford, who directed that film in New Mexico. She also developed, and was associate producer of the films *Promised Land* and *Some Girls* with director Michael Hoffman.

Between 1988 and 1990, she was senior vice-president of Norman Lear's, production company, Act III Productions. There she produced *Breaking In* by Bill Forsythe and developed *Fried Green Tomatoes*. 1991 to 1993, found her Senior Vice-president of Segue Productions where she developed and produced *Restoration* with Robert Downey Jr., Hugh Grant and Meg Ryan.

She also developed *Ransom* and sold it to Touchstone Pictures for director Ron Howard. She worked as Senior Vice-president for Cruise/Wagner Productions where she worked with development from 1993 to 1998.



Attachment Five – Time Coverage

TIME

An Honest Look at Illegal Immigration

Tuesday, Mar. 11, 2008 By TIM PADGETT

There is a hellish scene in the new Colombian film *Paraiso Travel* that should be watched by any American who has ever hired illegal immigrants —and, for that matter, any American who has ever shouted for their deportation. A group of weary Colombian migrants, having waded across a rushing river from Guatemala to Mexico, is violently set upon by the Maras, bloodthirsty gangbangers who prowl that border corridor. Men are shot, women are raped, children are terrorized. It's an almost daily occurrence of migrant life in this hemisphere, and the film captures it with haunting authenticity.

What's almost as disturbing is that few if any good films have ever captured it until now. Latin America's poorly financed movie industry can be as erratic as the region's governments; but the infrequent hits are always worth the wait, and that's certainly true of *Paraiso Travel*, which opened last month in Bogota and is setting Colombian box-office records before it heads to New York's Tribeca film festival next month. Like other memorable Latin films of this decade, including Mexico's *Amores Perros* and Brazil's *City of God*, *Paraiso Travel* is as richly crafted as a fine Day of the Dead altar. But for Yanquis, this tale of a Medellin couple's harrowing odyssey to the U.S., and their hard but often humorous struggle in New York, packs a welcome bonus in the midst of a presidential race: a thoughtful, non-politicized take on America's immigration mess.

Immigration cranks like Lou Dobbs, but also the immigration advocates he lambastes, would do well to stop the cable cacophony for a couple hours and see this movie when it hits U.S. screens. "I wanted to make a film that makes Latin Americans think twice about traveling to the U.S. illegally," says its Colombian-born director, Simon Brand, "but one that also makes Americans think twice about how these people are treated once they get here." He scores on both counts. Adapted from the novel by Colombian author Jorge Franco, *Paraiso Travel* (*paraiso* is Spanish for "paradise") makes you consider the darker consequences of open borders and closed minds alike. The former lure indocumentados into risking their lives getting here and straining the social infrastructure once they do; the latter cause xenophobes to ignore the causes of illegal immigration — the deep poverty down there and the deep demand for cheap labor up here — and block the necessary and reasonable proposals for managing it (a la last summer's immigration reform debacle).

Not that *Paraiso Travel* doesn't also depict the uplifting immigrant success stories and the broad economic benefits the U.S. derives from its underground workforce. But what distinguishes the film is its entrancing, flesh-and-blood glimpse into the quirky, angstridden workings of the indocumentado world: heated kitchen-table debates back home, demeaning labor cattle calls and desperate housing improvisations in the U.S. (including makeshift rooms

over loud, 24-hour racquetball courts in Queens). It's a milieu ripe with characters like a stuttering S&M photographer played with delightful understatement by Golden Globe nominee John Leguizamo (*To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar*); and a gorgeous street vendor and aspiring salsa singer played by Ana de la Reguera (Jack Black's heartthrob in *Nacho Libre*).

Leguizamo and De la Reguera are the film's only Hollywood stars, and they deliver stellar supporting performances. But Brand gets superb portrayals from his Colombian leads: Angelica Blandon as the teen sexpot Reina; and Aldemar Correa, whom Brand calls "the next Gael Garcia Bernal," as her bewildered boyfriend Marlon. Blandon and Correa, who were discovered in Medellin's theater scene, play lower-middle-class kids driven less by economic straits than by a gratuitous belief that even the worst of the U.S. is preferable to the best their own country can give them. Sitting in a dank, cubicle-size hostel room after arriving in New York, a skeptical Marlon reminds Reina that even America has "sh--." Her response: yeah, but it's "gringo sh--." She may sound naive — but she's also a reminder of how Latin America's ineffectual governments continue to drive away even those citizens who seem to be living semi-comfortably in their homelands.

In lieu of U.S. tourist visas, which post-9/11 are increasingly difficult to get, Reina convinces Marlon — using sexual seduction powers that make Salome seem like a nun — that they should pay a Medellin travel agency, Paraiso Travel, \$3,000 for what could be called the illegal alien package. It's a flight to Panama and then a Dantean journey by bus and foot to the U.S., through squalid hotels and scorching deserts — including nightmarish hours hidden by smugglers in a truckload of suffocating, hollowed-out logs. Paraiso Travel's screenwriters, Franco and Juan Rendon, interviewed a number of real migrants who have made the journey. "I'm fortunate to live in the U.S. legally," says producer Santiago Diaz, a Bogota native, "but we all know people living here illegally, and their story should be told. We made this film for them."

It will also do a lot for Colombian cinema, which came of age in 2004 with the Oscar-nominated, Colombian-U.S. production, *Maria Full of Grace*, and looks set to join Mexico, Brazil and Argentina as Latin American countries with bona fide industries. All have been aided in recent years by new government financing and generous tax breaks for businesses that invest in film — sources that made up almost a quarter of Paraiso Travel's \$4.7 million cost. The movie takes the Colombian boom up a notch, into the realm of films like *City of God* that Latin American critics are calling *la buena onda* — a more consistent "groove" of first-rate moviemaking that showcases a distinctive Latin feel, a documentary-style realism splashed with artful devices like hopscotch flashbacks and colorfully detailed shots. "These are films that more genuinely reflect Latin American culture," says Diaz.

Most of Paraiso Travel is set in America, where Reina and Marlon discover that the awful crossing they've just finished was only the beginning of their odyssey, as migrants and as a couple. To the boy, in fact, Reina morphs into a metaphor for America itself: Is she — is it — really worth the trials he's suffering? When the two become separated, his search for her is conflated with the larger question. And perhaps another: Is our immigration dysfunction really worth the human pain it causes migrants and the political pain it causes us?

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MARGARITA ROSA
DE FRANCISCO

Y JOHN
LEGUIZAMO

dirigida por SIMON BRAND



Paraiso Travel

peor que amarte es buscarte

PARAISO PICTURES presenta PARAISO TRAVEL en asociaci3n con GRAND ILLUSIONS ENTERTAINMENT
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