



FRANCE - CUBA
COPRODUCTION
GUIDE

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CINEMA & AUDIOVISUAL PRODUCTION 2023 - 2024

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CUBA'S AUDIOVISUAL AND CINEMATOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE

"Esta isla es algo muy grande. Aquí han ocurrido las cosas más extrañas y las más trágicas. Y siempre será así. La tierra, como los seres hermanos, tiene su destino. Y el de Cuba es un destino misterioso".

Miguel Barnet, *Canción de Rachel*, 1969



SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

Political and economic life in Cuba, a socialist republic since 1959, is highly centralized, resting almost entirely in the hands of the ruling single party. This means that the private sector plays a small albeit growing role in the national economy, as well as a limitation of freedom of enterprise to a defined number of sectors. **Freedom of expression and artistic creation are also hampered by instances of censorship, resulting in relative cultural isolation - although censorship is regularly circumvented.**

Cuba was long under foreign domination. First and foremost by the Spanish, who used the island as a hub for their maritime trade, as well as for its fertile land on which they cultivated sugar cane in large quantities, thanks in particular to the labor of the many slaves they brought over from Africa. Cuba freed itself from Spanish domination during the War of Independence (1896-1898), with the support of the United States. This support marked the beginning of a long domination of the Cuban economy by US companies, and in their wake, the involvement of criminal organizations. This hegemony was one of the main reasons behind the Socialist Revolution (1953-1959).

Lying at the intersection of the Atlantic Ocean, the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, the Cuban archipelago occupies a prime geographical position. Cuba is also relatively close to its neighbors: 150 kilometers from the United States to the north, 208 kilometers from Mexico to the west, 80 kilometers from the Bahamas to the northeast and 77 kilometers from Haiti to the southeast (see map).

This position at the intersection of several zones gives to Cuba a significant influence in regional geostrategy, as well as an openness and propensity for exchange with a wide variety of territories and cultures: North America, South America and the Caribbean, as well as the entire Spanish-speaking world, including Spain - a list to which we can legitimately add France, as the two countries have always maintained strong cultural links, more or less officially.



This openness adds to the island's cultural diversity, which is partly explained by the ethnic diversity of its population. The geographical position of Havana, the country's capital, on the north side of the island, facing Florida and the USA, demonstrates the close economic, political and cultural ties between the two countries, despite the embargo that has been in force for over 50 years.

The Cuban capital has developed thanks to its good geographical location. Today, the archipelago's economic and political activity is highly concentrated here: one Cuban in five lives in the city, i.e. some 2.4 million people (3.7 million including the metropolitan area) out of a total population of 11.2 million. This means that one Cuban in five lives in the capital, which alone has more inhabitants than the eleven other largest cities combined. Havana is also home to all the country's administrative and decision-making bodies, as well as most of the country's remaining movie theaters.

Economic crisis and record-high inflation

The current Cuban context is above all marked by the economic and inflationary crisis resulting from several factors: the health crisis linked to the Covid-19 epidemic in 2020, the strengthening of US sanctions by the Trump administration in 2021, and then the monetary reorganization, or reordenamiento económico, in the same year. Although the Covid-19 crisis was relatively well managed in terms of health, it nevertheless shattered the country's fragile economic equilibrium, which had fallen victim to economic sanctions and structural weaknesses.

The economy, extremely dependent on the tourism sector - with travellers coming mainly from North America and Europe - as well as on the export of services to Latin America, has borne the full brunt of political instability in South America, as well as border closures and travel restrictions as part of the fight against the epidemic, particularly from European and North American countries (4.7 million tourists to the island in 2018 versus 350,000 in 2021).

In results: a 10% drop in GDP by 2020, accompanied by rampant inflation that is still crippling the country and imposing difficult living conditions on the population.

The strengthening of sanctions under the Trump era and their continuation by the Biden administration worsened the situation. These come after a period of détente and historic rapprochement during Barack Obama's term in office. While there is little left of the diplomatic rapprochement of the second half of the 2010s, Cuba is nonetheless keen to modernize its domestic economy by opening up the island to private enterprise - a desire reinforced by the need to make up for the loss of revenue linked to the collapse of tourism. As a result, since 2021, the state has authorized the creation of small and medium enterprises with up to 100 employees. However, reforms are slow and applied on a limited scale.

A country of cinema

Neither censorship nor economic difficulties seem to be able to dent Cuban enthusiasm for cinema. They watch everything, with a particular taste for French films of all periods, as confirmed by the success of the French Film Festival held on the island since 1998.

A cinephilia under the cloak of embargos and censorship, where films are exchanged in the form of "paquetes", i.e. batches of audiovisual and cinematographic content transmitted from hard disk to hard disk. This film knowledge and passion also owes much to the Cuban regime's cultural policy. As soon as it came to power, the Cuban government put in place a program to promote and develop the cinematographic arts, image education, television development and the training of audiovisual technicians and authors for cinema and television. The spirit of this program lives on to this day, notably through television, which is entirely nationalized, and voluntary programming in favor of quality and cultural diversity, facilitated by the non-respect of copyright. This national policy maintains Cubans' passion for cinema.

But Cuba's history with the seventh art dates back long before the Revolution...

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

A rich cinematic heritage

The history of cinema in Cuba starts back in 1897, when the Frenchman Gabriel Veyre, director and operator for the Lumière brothers, organized the first public screenings in Cuba, before shooting his first film in Havana, *Simulacro de incendio* (*Fire Drill*). The very first documentary dates from 1906, *El parque de Palatino* (*The Palatine Park*) by Enrique Díaz Quesada. By 1910, there were already 200 cinemas on the island, and production was booming.

Nevertheless, despite regular cinema attendance and attempts to create the first Cuban film institution, the national industry struggled to develop. The main problem was foreign (mainly American) control of the economy, which limited the development of a genuine local film industry.

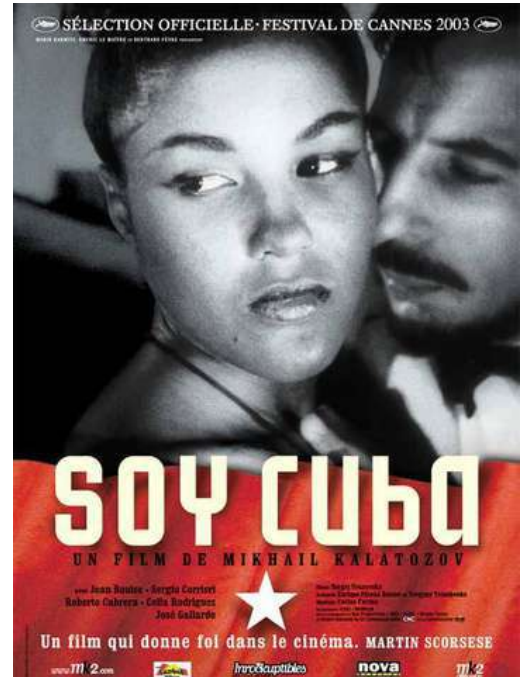
Until the Revolution, the majority of films shown were American, European or Mexican productions shot in Cuba. But all that changed with the Revolution.

A proper national film industry was finally able to develop. The country then saw the emergence of a number of outstanding filmmakers and films, initially focusing on documentaries: Gutiérrez Alea's *Historias de la Revolución* (*Stories of the Revolution*) in 1960; García Espinosa's *El joven rebelde* (*The Young Rebel*) in 1961, followed by Humberto Solás's *Lucía* in 1968; and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*) in 1968.



The young rebel, of García Espinosa (Centre Pompidou, 2015)

Numerous films with revolutionary themes, such as Mikhail Kalatozov's 1964 masterpiece *Soy Cuba*, first Soviet-Cuban collaboration, were also produced.



Affiche de *"Soy Cuba"* de Mikhaïl Kalatozov (Tack Journal)

From 1965 onwards, avant-garde cinema, for its part, also enjoyed real success at European festivals. During the 1960s, Cuban cinema was one of the spearheads of the "New Latin American Cinema" movement.

The move towards conventional and more conformist cinema, which was quite marked in the 1970s, was short-lived.

Later, the political crisis of the 1980s revived the political comedy genre, with its focus on bureaucracy and the deficiencies of the regime. The collapse of the Soviet Union, which marked the end of financial support from the USSR, put a considerable brake on domestic production. In a context marked by financing difficulties, co-production with foreign countries gradually emerged as the solution of choice. A solution made possible in part thanks to Cuba's high-quality cinematographic and audiovisual skills, both on technical and artistic level.

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

Key dates

1897: First film made in Cuba by french director Gabriel Veyre, released on February 7, 1897: *Simulacro de incendio (Fire drill)*

1906: 1906 : Enrique Díaz Quesada makes *El parque de Palatino (The Palatine Park)*, a one-minute documentary that marks the beginning of the Cuban film industry. However, the industry struggled to develop in the face of hostility from foreign film distributors. Until 1959, the majority of films shown were European.

1960: Launch of the Cuban Cinematheque by the ICAIC.

1961: Creation of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT).

1965: The entire distribution and exhibition system in the country is owned by the ICAIC.

1979: Creation of the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema.

1986: Creation of the International Film and Television School (EICTV, Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión).

1991: The collapse of the USSR plunges Cuba into crisis, forcing the ICAIC to turn to international co-production.

2015: Signature between the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Arts and Industry (ICAIC) and the Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée (CNC) of a cooperation agreement in several areas, with the following objectives:

- increasing the number of co-productions by encouraging artistic and technical exchanges ;
- film restoration;
- equipping the La Rampa cinema, located in the central Vedado district, with digital equipment.

2019: Law decree 373/2019 establishing the possibility of subscribing to the register of independent audiovisual and cinema creators.

This law :

- opens the way for greater freedom for producers/directors;
- confers legal personality on the beneficiary;
- allows a bank account to be opened for the film.

1517 requests for registration were made to the Audiovisual and Cinematographic Creator Register in 2019.

2020: Decree 373 comes into effect and the Fondo de Fomento (Promotion Fund) is created to finance films.

2021: First work co-produced between ICAIC and I4Films, an independent production company: *Cuentos de un día más*, coordinated by Fernando Pérez.

A system centralized by two state institutions : ICAIC and ICRT

- ICAIC and ICRT share a monopolistic role in the management of cinema/audiovisual and television/radio media.
- ICAIC occupies the major role in all sectors of Cuban cinema, despite the trend showing hesitancy about official recognition of independent production.
- There are no private television channels in Cuba. The ICRT manages the entire network.
- Both are extensions of the regime's government.
- They promote quality cultural and artistic works and programs.



The ICAIC

Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos
(Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry)
www.cubacine.cult.cu

Created in 1959, just 83 days after the victory of the Cuban Revolution, the ICAIC was the first institution set up by the new regime in the cultural sector. Its creation was formalized in law no. 169, which states its objectives and organization. At the time, ICAIC was part of the process of "audiovisual literacy" for the people. Its objectives were immense : to promote cinema at all levels, and in particular to create a national and independent film industry, in line with the ideals of the Revolution.

Created with a high idea of the cinematographic art (enshrined in law no. 169: "*Cinema is an Art*"), the ICAIC's original mission was to guarantee the presence of the necessary resources for the development of cinema on the island, and this involved the creation of an industry: "*The structure of the cinematographic work requires the creation of a highly technical and modern industrial complex and a distribution system endowed with the same characteristics*". Art, the development of an industry, and the transmission of revolutionary ideals are the institution's three guidelines.

To this day, even with the recent emergence and legalization of independent producers marking a slight liberalization of the industry today, the ICAIC is still the most important institution in Cuban cinema. Financing, filming permits, legal aspects, distribution - almost everything is regulated by the ICAIC, making it a nearly omnipotent actor in the sector. This hegemonic position puts it at the forefront of all debates and controversies in the industry. The ICAIC also plays a role in film conservation and distribution. As such, it hosts the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema.

In order to ensure the full range of its activities, the ICAIC is organized in to nine sections:

- **Cinemateca de Cuba** (Cuban film archives)
- **Casa del Festival** (Festivals)
- **Archivo Fílmico** (Film archives)
- **Centro de Información Cinematográfica ICAIC** (Cinematographic information center)
- **Agencia de representación de Autores** (Authors representation agency)
- **Audiovisuales ICAIC, Producción-Distribución** (Audiovisual, production and distribution)
- **Estudios Fílmicos de Animación ICAIC** (Animation studios)
 - Estudio de Producción (Production)
 - Estudio de Infografía (Graphics)
 - Estudio de Postproducción (Post-production)
- **Distribuidora Nacional ICAIC** (National distribution)
 - Unidad de Distribución de Películas (Film distribution unit)
 - Unidad proyectos Calle 23 (23rd street project unit)
 - Unidad de Servicios (Servicing unit)

ICAIC's missions today

"The ICAIC is an institution of the Cuban State in charge of managing and promoting the creation, production, commercialization and conservation of national and foreign audiovisual art works (exhibited in Cuba), responsibly overseeing the application of the cultural policy of the Cuban Revolution in each of its functions, and striving to contribute to the formation of a more cultured spectator".

A role at the center of the debate

The importance of the ICAIC is regularly questioned. Many people complain about what they call icaicentrismo (or icaicentrism), a term used to describe the fact that the ICAIC holds a monopoly over the entire film and audiovisual sector in Cuba.

No freedom, no independent company, everything is regulated, directed, monitored and controlled by the government via the ICAIC (see the case study below on the documentary film La Habana de Fito and the filmmakers' assembly).



L'ICRT

Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión
(Cuban Institute of Radio and Television)
www.icrt.gob.cu

Founded in 1961, this is Cuba's public radio and television company. This television company is a member of the Ibero-American Telecommunications Organization (OTI), which includes the public radio and television companies of the Spanish and Portuguese speaking countries of America and Europe, as well as the public radio and television company of Guinea-Bissau.

Program

ICRT offers eleven national channels, all free, as well as regional channels:

- Canal educativo 1 and 2 = Educational channels
- Cubavisión
- Cubavisión internacional
- Tele rebelde = The all-important most-important sports channel.
- Canal Caribe = Family channel
- Clave Caribe = Dedicated to concerts.
- Canal Habana = Capital city channel
- Multivision = Cultural channel
- Telesur = Latin America channel (co-broadcast with Argentina, Venezuela and Uruguay).
- Russia Today

Cuban television has several distinctive characteristics. First of all, it is completely free of charge, and the fact that it is the most popular media in Cuban homes throughout the country makes it a broadcasting media of choice.

Added to this are the strong programming choices. Cuban television offers high-quality content, particularly in the fields / domains of culture, art and, of course, cinema. The films broadcast, whether documentaries or dramas, range from Cuban productions to international mainstream and Hollywood films. Some content, such as US blockbusters, is broadcast without respect for copyright. From the ICRT website, it is possible to watch live broadcasts of programs on the different channels. Only Cubavision internacional is available in France.

Example of programs

- **Political programs:** La mesa redonda (The Round Table) = a historical political program. Recently, another political program called Con filo was created for young people, presenting itself as anti-fake news and the modern transposition of La mesa redonda.
- **Image education programs:** often, when a program is released, it is accompanied by a presentation.

Training

There are currently two film and audiovisual training courses in Cuba:



L'EICTV : *Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión*

The International Film and Television School of San Antonio de los Baños is world-renowned for the quality of its training. Founded by Colombian writer and journalist Gabriel García Márquez, Argentine poet and filmmaker Fernando Birri, and Cuban director and theorist Julio García Espinosa in 1986, with the support of Fidel Castro, it is considered one of the most important institutions of its kind in the world.

Presented as a "*center for the training of audiovisual creators with emancipated and emancipating outlooks*", the EICTV offers eight courses: fiction directing, documentary directing, production, scriptwriting, television and new media, photography, sound, and editing.

The third year is devoted to the production of feature-length fiction or documentary films, in which all specialties participate. Students in the screenplay course write the complete screenplay for a feature fiction film.

Each school year welcomes international students aged between 22 and 30, mostly from Latin and Central America and the Caribbean. The school usually recruits a single Cuban student per course, i.e. around eight Cuban students out of 120 per year.

In addition to this three-year degree course, six-month crash courses on fiction, documentary, and screenwriting are also available.

The EICTV also offers occasional face-to-face or online workshops on a variety of topics aimed at film and audiovisual professionals.

Several acclaimed Cuban directors have attended the school: Juan Carlos Cremata Marbeti, director of *Nada and Viva Cuba*, Alejandro Brugués, director of *Juan de los Muertos*, Patricia Ramos, director of *El techo* and Carlos M. Quintela, director of *Los lobos del este*.

One of the great strengths of this school is its transnational nature. It was founded by artists of many nationalities, and to this day involves teachers, lecturers, and students from all over the world. From its inception to 2022, 1054 students from 62 different countries have graduated from the EICTV. Alumni work closely together, remain closely connected, and form a global network of talents. Those who choose to stay in Cuba, or who wish to shoot in Cuba, can enjoy the school's infrastructure and use its equipment to carry out their projects.



The ISA (*Instituto Superior de las Artes de la faculté de La Havane*) : The FAMCA program (*Artes de los Medios e Comunicación Audiovisual*)

The Higher Institute of Arts' FAMCA program in Havana trains professionals in film, radio, television, and other audiovisual communication tools. Entirely indented for Cubans, the program prepares students for careers in directing, production, photography, editing and sound. It is open to both students and working professionals of the sector. The FAMCA offers 30 places in Havana, 15 in Holguín and 15 in Camagüey.

The FAMCA also offers nine-month part-time thematic crash courses for audiovisual and film professionals.

The emergence of new players: independent producers

- Since 2019, independent producers based in Cuba have had legal status as "audiovisual creators".
- They must register with the ICAIC in the Audiovisual Creator's Register (RECAC) to work legally.
- They can form cinema and audiovisual "creative collectives", but these entities have no legal personality and cannot be called "production companies" ("productoras").
- Mass exile of filmmakers to Spain and the US: it's possible to set up an all-Cuban film crew in Madrid or Miami.
- The diaspora maintains strong links with the island and claims a Cuban cinema made from abroad.

The status of producers in Cuba

Independent producers have long existed in Cuba, but their legal status has only recently been established. They became legal in September 2019 with the Audiovisual and Cinematographic Creator's Law (Decreto Ley del Creador Audiovisual y Cinematográfico), which creates:

- the register of audiovisual workers;
- the status of audiovisual and cinematographic creator as independent artist;
- the status of audiovisual and cinematographic "creative collective / group".

All Cubans and foreigners with permanent residence in Cuba can register and fall under any of these new statuses. This text recognizes their official status as audiovisual creators and allow them to open a bank account to manage funds dedicated to their projects, to hire or be hired as producers, and to benefit from a specific social security scheme. Cinema and audiovisual creators and creative groups therefore have the right to *"produce their works individually or in association with other creators, as well as distribute and market them themselves or through third parties"*.

To join the Audiovisual Creator's Register, one must provide proof of work on three projects, which may have been produced while studying. Once the application approved, the independent audiovisual creator is issued with a card attesting to their registration.

One can create a "creative group" at the request of at least three producers who have already registered with the creator's register. "Creative groups" enjoy the prerogatives attributed to production companies: they produce audiovisual and cinematographic content from the development to the post-production phase, have the right to sell exhibition and screening rights of their works (as well as these of third-party works in accordance with applicable copyright law), to distribute their works, to carry out line production and to sign the necessary contracts for the production of an audiovisual or cinematographic work.

Creative groups, however, have no legal personality and are therefore not entitled to use the designation *"independent production house or company"*.

To sum up, the advantages of belonging to the creator's register are:

- being legally recognized in Cuba, with major limitations due to the lack of knowledge on the part of government institutions and entities;
- being represented and supported by the ICAIC, the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry;
- being eligible to apply for the Cuban Cinema Promotion Fund (FFCC).

The diaspora

As a result of the current political and economic situation, many professionals from Cuba's audiovisual and cinema industry have left the country. In recent years, Cuba has experienced a wave of mass exile: between the end of 2021 and the end of 2022, 200,000 people left the island for the United States. In 2022, 300,000 people left to live abroad, adding to the two million Cubans already living outside the island. Filmmakers are no exception to this trend, most of them moving to Spain, the United States, Mexico, or Brazil, for several reasons:

- Escaping difficult living conditions, including in finding essentials.
- Difficulty accessing the essentials for filming, such as electricity and fuel.
- State censorship and icaicentrism;
- Surveillance of "dissident" artists by the authorities.

Today, the vast majority of filmmakers aged 25 to 45 live in Madrid or Barcelona. Some exiled producers explain that there are enough technicians to shoot Cuban films in these two cities, as well as in Miami.

Even though the relevant degrees on the island can train talented technicians - as shown by famous directors of photography such as Raúl Pérez Ureta - it is becoming increasingly difficult to find them in Cuba, particularly in sound and photography.

This mass exodus applies to all professions: directors, producers, film crews... According to Cuban producer and founder of Vega Alta Films Boris Prieto, who has lived in France for fifteen years, "in the last three years, 60 to 80% of filmmakers no longer live in Cuba. Of all the people I've worked with, there are only three or four left. The others are in Europe (Spain) and Miami."

As it grows, the diaspora is inventing new ways of producing Cuban cinema from abroad. Exiles maintain strong ties with the island. Through the themes they tackle and the artistic stance of their films, Cuban producers in exile remain deeply attached to their country, and have no hesitation in asserting the Cuban nature of their cinema.

However, making Cuban cinema from abroad doesn't come easy. Leila Monteiro and Daniela Muñoz, producers at Estudios S.T. who recently moved to Barcelona, explain that they face specific challenges related to their exile:

"From Spain, it's difficult to produce Cuban cinema being both part of Spain and Europe to be able to access funds, and at the same time still Cuban to be able to access Cuban funds and other funds from developing countries. You can make a Cuban movie talking about Cuba from outside the country, as a diaspora, but Cuban funds aren't accessible to us right now because we can't guarantee that the expenses needed will be made in Cuba. It's a conflict we face as exiled producers. Maintaining a Cuban cinema that has always been funded as the cinema of a developing country, even if it's not made in Cuba. [...] We're in a limbo, and in a way, I think we need to make the industry aware of the situation for this type of cinema".

CASE STUDY

illustration of cuban censorship and creation of the Cuban Filmmakers association

Documentary : *La Habana de Fito*, by Juan Pin Vilar

The state uses various ways to censor film professionals. Censorship takes several forms and can be direct or indirect. For example, the allocation of funds can allow the government to insidiously control the films produced.

To highlight the importance of this practice in Cuban cinema - and thus explain the creation of the Cuban Filmmakers association - we have chosen to study the case of the documentary *La Habana de Fito* (The Havana of Fito), symptomatic of the tensions between filmmakers and the government.

This film, directed in 2022 by Juan Pin Vilar and produced by Ricardo Oliva Figueredo, tells the story of the relationship between the famous Argentinian musician Fito Paez and the Cuban capital since the 1980s. The documentary shows how the state can interfere with filmmakers' freedom of expression. In April 2023, the Ministry of Culture banned the screening of certain documentaries in an independent cultural place in Havana, including the Juan Pin Vilar's film. This outright censorship led the filmmaker to write a letter to President Miguel Díaz-Canel. As a result, his documentary was finally broadcast on television, reedited and incomplete, without the permission of the director and producer.

For Juan Pin Vilar, the reason for the reediting was the questioning of the official death of revolutionary guerrilla Camilo Cienfuegos in 1959, as well as the death sentence handed down in 2003 to three young people who had hijacked a boat to flee to the United States.

In this case, it is not just about preventing the broadcasting of a work, but an action aimed at discrediting the director and producer, while infringing the copyright of Juan Pin Vilar and the composer Fito Paez.



This event simply brings back to the forefront a demand that Cuban filmmakers have been making for years.

On 27 November 2020, more than 300 artists staged an unprecedented demonstration in front of the Ministry of Culture in Havana to demand freedom of expression. Long before the *Habana de Fito* scandal, Cuban filmmakers had tried to engage in dialogue with the government, but to no avail. On 11 July 2021, popular demonstrations were organized following the long period of confinement linked to Covid. Artists such as Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara were imprisoned. On 15 November, the authorities refused to allow a large-scale demonstration, planned in particular via the Archipiélago platform.

In response to this unprecedented censorship of *La Habana de Fito*, the Cuban Filmmakers Association was set up in June 2023. It was made up of around two hundred filmmakers, many of them students. A meeting was organized, which can be followed worldwide via *Google Meet*.

Among the very active members were film critic Gustavo Arcos Fernández-Brito and filmmaker Fernando Pérez.

For the 600 artists who signed the declaration of 15 June 2023 stating their opposition, this case of censorship is illustrative of the entire cultural system in Cuba: a type of procedure that has become automatic when the filmmaker's discourse contradicts the official one. Hundreds of professionals from the Cuban film industry are involved in this battle. The signatories of the declaration include other important figures, such as the poet and composer Silvio Rodríguez and the actor and filmmaker Jorge Perugorría, who is the star of the emblematic film *Fresa y Chocolate (Strawberry or Chocolate)* released in 1993. The signatories also denounce a violation of the agreements of the Film Development Fund (FFCC - Fondo de fomento al Cine Cubano), which the Minister of Culture, Alpidio Alonso, refutes. Whether from the point of view of the documentary's discourse or its aftermath's one, a veritable war is being waged in the country between the official versions and those of the filmmakers.

The scale of this rallying testifies to the systematic nature of censorship in Cuba, whereas Cuban cinema finds its uniqueness and identity precisely in its social and political aspects. On 20 June 2023, the Ministry of Culture wanted to convene a meeting at the ICAIC, which the filmmakers refused because it was closed to the public. The main demand was that the government should be more transparent, and that meetings should be systematically broadcast on social networks. The meeting finally took place on 23 June at the Chaplin cinema, but it was only half a victory in that it was only open to people who had registered in advance.

Following on from what happened with *La Habana de Fito*, on 3 July 2023 the Cuban Filmmakers Association demanded justification for the censorship and unauthorized broadcasting of the film, which is a practice that had become almost systematic in the Cuban film industry. Among other things, they are demanding an end to censorship and justice for works censored in the past, accusing the State of wanting to control collective memory.



They are also demanding greater transparency in decision-making on live broadcasts.

They expressed their desire to draw up a genuine Ley de cine (film law), as well as a debate on copyright and new places for national cinema screenings.

However, the influence of this Association needs to be qualified, as it still has little legitimacy in the eyes of the State: "This legitimacy is based above all on the legitimacy that filmmakers give themselves, by exerting pressure on social networks and at their meetings: the progress achieved remains tiny, but nonetheless real".

Far from being anecdotal, this particular case highlights all the problems associated with Cuban film production, in a system marked by fragmentation between the players in the profession and the government.

History

Cuba has always been a country of cinema, and was one of the first Latin American countries to have cinema screens. The ICAIC was the first institution of its kind to be created in Latin America, and Cuba was also the second country on the continent to have television and radio. The country's exhibition coverage has long been extremely well developed, with cinemas and screens in every town, even the smallest. As Cuba's economy is communist, there are no private TV channels and no advertising.

A wide diversity of cinematographic and audiovisual practices

Cuban film and television practices are highly diverse. Film and TV content ranges from American blockbusters to very specific, even elitist, screening cycles. These cycles are organized by embassies, such as those of Romania, the United Kingdom, France and Spain, through festivals (French film festival, Spanish film festival, European film festival, etc.), or by the Cinémathèque de Cuba. There's a real craze for French films, reflected in agreements between Havana's Rampa cinema and the French Embassy in Cuba. Cubans also consume a lot of telenovelas, mostly Venezuelan, Brazilian and Turkish. Recently, more qualitative Cuban daily series have emerged, such as *Calendario* (Calendar).

After the reign of comedy, which has now fallen into disuse, the most produced genres are now social and historical films. While the ICAIC produces many historical, epic and exalted films, social films are often subject to censorship because of the subjects they tackle. On the other hand, genres such as science fiction and horror are rarely produced, being considered low-quality entertainment. Lastly, although Cuba is historically a documentary country, fiction is favored.

Fiction

Cuban cinema, initially produced by the ICAIC, appeared with neo-realism between 1959 and 1965. This movement was born of a sense of urgency on the part of the filmmakers to film as close to reality as possible, and to oppose the Hollywood aesthetic and its economic domination.

Among the first feature-length fiction films produced by the ICAIC were *Cuba baila* (*Cuba Dances*) and *El Joven rebelde* (*The Young Rebel*) by Julio Garcia Espinosa (1960 and 1961), and *Historias de la revolución* (*Stories of the Revolution*) by Gutiérrez Alea (1960). In 1962, with the opening up to new influences such as the Nouvelle Vague in Europe, Gutiérrez Alea inaugurated the genre of political comedy with *Las doce sillas* (*The Twelve Chairs*). Today, this genre remains one of the mainstays of Cuban cinema. With this avant-gardism came the abandonment of political neorealism in favour of popular cinema, with Gutiérrez Alea's *La Muerte de un burócrata* (*Death of a Bureaucrat*) (1966) serving as an illustration of this characteristic genre of Cuban cinema.

In the 1970s, this cinema became politically and aesthetically more conventional, in line with the loss of revolutionary momentum and the growing influence of the Soviet Union. However, the "Imperfect Cinema" trend was identified, notably with Sara Gómez's *De cierta manera* (*In a certain way*) (1974), a critique of Cuban machismo. The conformism of this period led to a return to historical narratives.

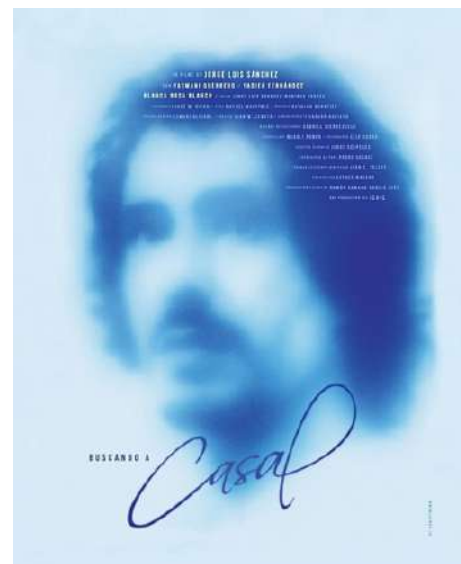
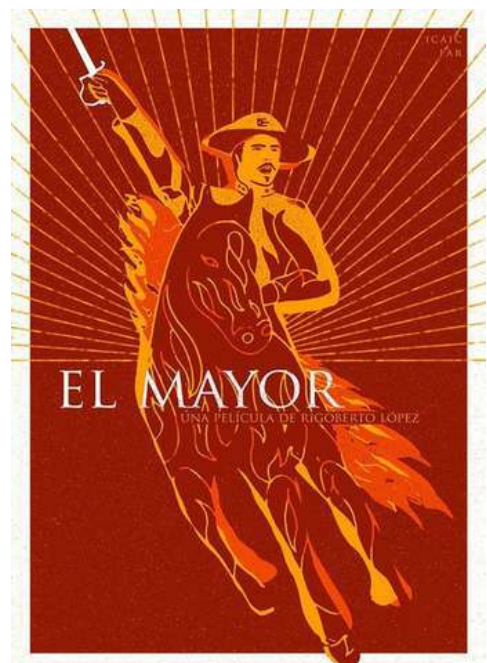
In the 1990s, the collapse of Soviet communism, and therefore a large part of the Cuban economy, required that most Cuban feature films had to be co-produced with other countries.

The first forms of censorship began. After winning a prize at the Berlin Film Festival, Daniel Díaz Torres's *Alicia en el pueblo de maravillas* (*Alice in Wonderland*) (1991) was banned in Cuba because of its criticism of socialism, which was not widely accepted in times of crisis. The irony of the 1970s and the mainstream humour of the 1990s, which made Cuban cinema so unique, have disappeared. There are now more genre-oriented productions, which are not much favoured by the institution, as well as dramas.

In 2011, *Juan de los muertos* (*Juan of the Dead*), directed by Alejandro Burgués, marked the transition between institutional and independent production. It is the only zombie film in the entire national filmography, and offers a metaphorical reflection on the situation of Cubans from the point of view of the filmmaker now exiled in the United States.

Among the more recent films, co-produced internationally and often critical of the Cuban government, we might mention *Melaza* (*Molasses*) by Carlos Lechuga (2012). This was the first Cuban film co-produced with Arte France, which was eventually censored for its criticism of the Cuban situation; *Inocencia* (*Innocence*) by Alejandro Gil (2018), one of the few pro-regime independent films currently on show. It represented Cuba at the 24th edition of the Ottawa Latin American Film Festival, organised by the Canadian Film Institute and the Latin American embassies (GRULA) in Canada. The collective film *Cuentos de un día mas* (*Stories of another day*), made up of six short films by Rosa María Rogríguez, Alán González, Carolina Fernández-Vega, Yoel Infante, Katherine T. Gavilán and Sheyla Pool and Eduardo Eimil, is the first sign of a renaissance in post-confinement cinema, and Miguel Coyula's *Corazon Azul* (*Blue Heart*) (2021), which has been seen internationally despite not having had a national release

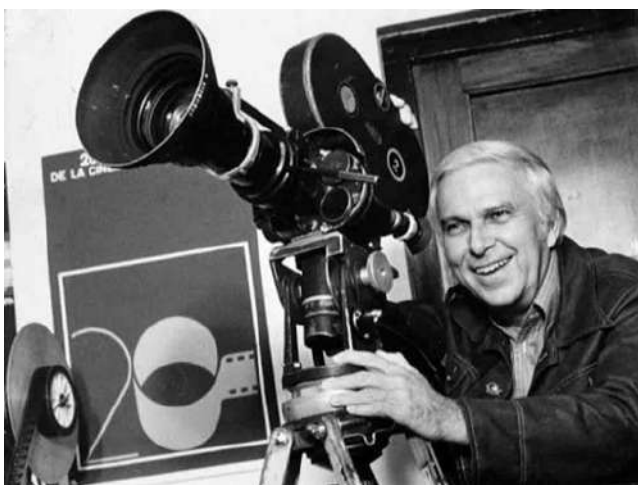
Recent ICAIC productions include *Últimos días en la Habana* (*Last Days in Havana*) by Fernando Pérez Valdés (2016), *El viaje extraordinario de Celeste García* (*The Extraordinary Journey of Celeste Garcia*) by Arturo Infante (2018), *El Mayor* (*The Greatest*) by Rigoberto López (2020), billed as the most expensive ICAIC-supported Cuban production in the history of Cuban cinema, which is a celebration of the Cuban spirit of independence facing the foreign imperialism, or *Buscando a casa* (*Searching for a casa*) by Jorge Luis Sanchez (2020), the most recent film listed on the ICAIC website.



Documentary

Along with the birth of Cuban cinema during the neo-realist period, the documentary genre emerged in Cuba. In number of productions, it dominated over fiction, which may find some explanation in the Cubans' need to portray their reality.

The Noticiero ICAIC Latinoamericano (ICAIC Latin American News) was first broadcast on June 6, 1960 through the weekly Latin American news program of the ICAIC. This experimental, militant and informative documentary has played a significant role in the lives of Cubans. The program was directed by Santiago Alvarez, who became a leading figure in the realm of Cuban documentary filmmaking, with approximately 70 films to his name, often awarded in international festivals such as *Ciclón (Cyclone)* in 1963; *Now* in 1965; *¡Hasta la victoria siempre! (Until Victory, Always!)* and *Hanoi Martes 13* in 1967, and *LBJ* in 1968.



Santiago ALVAREZ

Over the 30 years of existence of this program, many Cuban filmmakers have been trained in this school of reality, allowing them to enrich their artistic skills and their knowledge of society and politics. These emerging filmmakers include:

- Tomás Gutiérrez Alea with *Esta tierra nuestra (This Land of Ours)*, 1959; *Asamblea general (General Assembly)*, 1960
- Julio García Espinosa with *El mégano (The Mangrove)*, 1955; *La Vivienda (The Housing)*, 1959

- Sara Gómez with *Guanabacoa: crónica de mi familia (Guanabacoa: Chronicle of My Family)*, 1966
- Octavio Cortázar with *Por primera vez (For the First Time)* in 1967.

Cuban documentary took a new direction in the 2000s with the change of political era and the handover of power to Raúl Castro. From then on, two main themes were addressed:

- The successes of the Cuban Revolution, *Montaña de luz (Mountain of Light)* in 2005 by Guillermo Centeno, which praises the Cuban program of international medical assistance);
- Various local manifestations, such as the denunciation of controversies *Seres extravagantes (Extravagant Beings)*, in 2004 by Manuel Zayas about the writer Reinaldo Arenas, which was filmed clandestinely in Cuba before being censored on the island).

In addition to these themes, certain documentaries such as *Suite Habana (Havana Suite)* (2003) have been hailed for their aestheticism. Some directors, such as Enrique Colina, have been more prominent than others. He has been closely associated with the Cinélatino Festival in Toulouse since 1991, when ENSAV signed an exchange agreement with the Cuban school of San Antonio de los Baños (EICTV).

Cuban documentaries continue to be screened at numerous international festivals:

- Through discoveries: Short film *Pattaki* (2018) by Everlane Moraes, *En la boca de la mina (At the Mouth of the Mine)* (2019) by Brandán Cerviño at Cinélatino 2020, or *Landrián* by Ernesto Daranas scheduled for the 2024 edition of Cinélatino.
- Through selections in official competitions: Short film *Camino de lava (Lava Road)* by Gretel Marin at the 2023 editions of Cinélatino and FIFAC in Guyana, or *Ese furioso deseo sin nombre (That Furious Desire Without Name)* by Florencia Colman at Cinélatino in 2021.

They can also gain visibility by receiving awards such as the Audience Award for Best Documentary, as was the case for Lazaro and the shark by William Sabourin O'Reilly at the FIFAC in 2023, or the Best Short Documentary award, in the same festival, won by Davide Tasito in 2021 for the film Carbon.

The legacy of documentary in Cuba continues with its teaching from the university level, notably at the San Antonio de los Baños school, where students produced nearly six short documentary films in 2022.



Animation

History of animation in Cuba

At the beginning of Cuban animation, artists worked with only the basics of the craft, limiting innovation in drawings and scenarios. After the era of Fidel Castro, works began to become socially and politically conscious. Examples include *Los Indocubanos (The Indo-Cubans)* by Modesto Garcia Alvarez and activist films by Jesus de Armas like Remember Girón. Animation then became a collaborative industry without commercial purposes. Cuban cartoons were only known on the island and were never exported internationally until the release of the feature film *Vampiros en La Habana (Vampires in Havana)* by Juan Padrón in 1985. Stop-motion films, such as *20 years* by Bárbaro Joel Ortiz (2009), and mixed short films like *La luna en el jardín (The Moon in the Garden)* by Adanoe Lima and Yemeli Cruz in 2017 followed.

During the Cold War, cartoons aimed primarily to educate and highlight Cuban customs and traditions. However, they were challenged by imported content from major powers such as Bugs and Daffy or Russian cartoons like Gustavus and Nu, pogodi!.

The increasing popularity of animated projects in Central and South America creates a new market. However, without CG and VFX studios in Cuba, only three animation studios manage to conduct projects: the Cuban Studio Estudios de Animación, the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT), and the Anima studio based in Holguin.

Unfortunately, new artists remain underprepared, teachers are underpaid, and there is no professional training available to Cubans on their territory. The country is trying to update its digital techniques (purchase of computers, image scanners, and software) in response to the high cost of hand-drawn animation. However, the cost of animation in Cuba remains cheap compared to the rest of the world.

Popular cartoons in Cuba

- **Elpidio Valdés**

A fictional character from a Cuban comic strip, Elpidio Valdés was created by Juan Padrón, also known as "the father of Cuban animation".



Elpidio Valdés is a mambí (independence fighter in the war against colonialism) who fights against the Spanish for the liberation of his country. This animated character represents the Cuban peasants who, in the 19th century, joined forces with slaves and landowners to form the Liberation Army during the Ten Years' War.

There is not a single Cuban who does not know Elpidio Valdés, the cartoon hero created in Cuba. Elpidio Valdés has been inscribed in the national heritage list because he embodies the national identity and brings Cubans together.

- **First CGI feature film:**

Released in 2014, *Meñique y el espejo mágico* (*Tom Little and the Magic Mirror*) was co-produced by the Spanish company Ficción Producciones and screened in regions like Europe, Dubai and South Korea.

This is the country's first 3D animated feature film, supervised by the animator Jerzy Perez.



In the United States, Jerzy Perez, supervisor of *Tom Little and the Magic Mirror* (*Meñique y el espejo mágico*), explains: "The biggest challenge facing the animation industry in Cuba today is the lack of technology and the obstacles that exist to obtain it {...} Until the release of *Tom Little* in 2014, doing CGI animation in Cuba was terrifying, mainly due to the cost and technology required to make this type of film."

Unlike in Western countries, Cuban artists must essentially learn and transmit their knowledge among themselves.

Indeed, difficulties in accessing the internet limit the consultation of online tutorials, and the US embargo, which hinders exchanges with foreigners as well as the arrival of trainers, the establishment of schools and new companies... There are also difficulties in accessing software rights and licenses. As a result, a "brain drain" occurs, leading animators to leave the country.

While the Cuban animation sector has experienced some growth in recent years, it has been sporadic. Moreover, the production of a film entirely made in digital special effects, like *Meñique y el espejo mágico*, is particularly remarkable.

Although the ICAIC used to organize animation festivals in Cuba, such as Cubanima (international animation festival for children and adolescents) and Muestra Joven - which aimed to promote the work of young Cuban filmmakers who made their films outside the Institute - there are none left now.

Telenovelas

Telenovelas are an important rendezvous for Cubans, a ritual in which the whole family participates. They often exchange opinions on ongoing soap operas, whether on public transport, while queuing in a store, or even at work. Viewers are so involved in these telenovelas that children sometimes bear the names of the protagonists, viruses are named after the villains, and the gestures of the most charismatic characters are imitated by the population.

Telenovelas continue to attract more audience than avant-garde programs. While they are mostly Brazilian, this genre is attributed to Mexico even though the first Mexican novela, *Senda prohibida*, was only aired in 1958.

In the early 1930s, radio broadcast a story called a radionovela throughout the island for the first time. The oral transmission (rather than written) of novelas reached a wide audience, especially women, among a population that was mostly illiterate. This advantage also opened up a flourishing market for large American companies, such as Palmolive, which quickly interspersed episodes with their advertising spots.

It became so widespread that Félix Benjamín Caignet Salomón (Felix B. Caignet), the Franco-Haitian writer and musical composer who wrote the first and most famous radionovela, *El derecho de nacer* (*The right to be born*), referred to himself as "a writer for housewives". In 1948, he created a radio soap opera depicting woman, abandoned and pregnant by a married man, seeking a doctor for an abortion. Considered, still today, one of the most influential stories in the radio genre in the region, it was later adapted into a film in Mexico in 1951 and then into a series in 1952 in Cuba, when television appeared on the island. This radio soap opera also had a significant impact on Latin American cultural consumption. For Cuba, immersed in gang warfare and workers' struggles in 1948, *El derecho de nacer* was a breath of fresh air, bringing the entire population together in the evenings, from Monday to Saturday.

In the early 1950s, Cuban radionovelas flooded all of Latin America. Following the Second World War, the United States understood the importance of mass media. Control over radios and televisions in Latin America became one of the stakes of the Cold War. Cuba, with its experience in radio production, benefited from the first American investments. At the end of 1950, a few years before France, the island got its own television. Once again, the novelas managed to adapt and became the flagship programs of this new mass media. Television adapted the great classics of literature into soap operas. Thus, Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, or Stendhal became part of Cuban popular culture.

At the end of 1951 and beginning of 1952, the first telenovela, *Sua Vida Me Pertence* (*Your Life Belongs to Me*), was aired on television. It was a Brazilian production by TV Tupi with 25 episodes broadcast 3 times a week. At that time, novelas were characterized by their short duration - between 20 and 30 episodes - rarely exceeding 20 minutes; until the 1990s, only Brazil aired longer episodes of around 45 minutes.

With the Revolution of January 1st, 1959, these telenovelas came to an end.

In the ideological struggle between the United States and the USSR, the "culture of entertainment" was losing ground against what was considered "high culture". Cuban television became a means of transforming the former consumer into a politicized worker.

The wealthy princes depicted in the novelas were transformed into revolutionary heroes and the maids into union militants. But these new so-called "social" telenovelas did not find their audience in the Latin American market. Brazil and Mexico took over. 30 years later, as Cuba prospered, the broadcast of a Brazilian telenovela was finally granted. At 9 p.m., the island stopped all activity to follow the adventures of Malue. Unable to ignore such success, Cuban television television thus reconnected with its traditions while maintaining a social dimension.

Little by little, despite the orientations given, Cuban telenovelas begin to break the barriers of censorship. Today, themes such as homosexuality, prostitution, or corruption appear in longer telenovelas (minimum 100 episodes).

In 2023, the taste for telenovelas persists in Cuba, despite new audiovisual offerings. "We kiss, we get drunk together, we evaluate each other continuously and this waste, this overabundance of emotions, is absolutely cultural, it's in our DNA {...}" Ilan Stavans, writer.



Sua Vida Me Pertence (1952)

Séries

Faced with the power of telenovelas, series have not managed to gain any real momentum in the country. They are not the priority in terms of production for local actors. There are only two series, each with one season, produced and distributed in Cuba: *Four seasons in Havana* (2016) and "*alendario (Calendar)*(2022).



New media

The emergence of new media on the island of Cuba is only very recent. The arrival of 4G in 2018 allowed EICTV to create a new workshop, IDOC. Before this date, it was difficult to develop new media projects.

As a result, EICTV was able to create three interactive documentary projects, falling into the new media category. The interactive documentary *La escuela de todos los mundos (The school of all worlds)* is the first project in this category in Cuba. This was followed by *Metáfora Viva (Living Metaphor)*, the most ambitious and comprehensive project, and then by *Wi-Five*. The island still has a long way to go in this field, especially in terms of virtual reality.

COPRODUCING WITH CUBA

2

OVERVIEW OF CUBAN PRODUCTION

ICAIC

The ICAIC used to produce ten feature films a year. It was the only institution with a film support fund. Only filmmakers working for the ICAIC could benefit from it., independant filmmakers were producing films with their own funds or through associations such as Los Hermanos Saíz (The Saíz Brothers). The latter was set up in 1986 and enabled filmmakers aged 35 or under who were members of the association to apply for support.

In March 2019, the Council of the State adopted decree no. 373 on independent audiovisual and cinematographic creators, bringing many changes to the Cuban film industry. The ICAIC creates a support fund, the Fondo de Fomento del Cine Cubano (FFCC), to help the creation of short or feature-length fiction films, documentaries or animations, in the development, production or post-production phase. At the same time, the ICAIC continues to produce, although its output is currently limited to two feature films a year. The fund's average budget is around \$100,000 per year. There is no precise annual rendezvous for the fund's call for projects and it takes around 3 months for applicants to get a reply. The members of the committees are professionals from the sector and they change every year.

Since 2020, the ICAIC has received 219 projects/applications, 69 have been supported and 42 have been finalised.

In 2021, the Fund closed its third call for projects. 39 feature films responded, 32 of which were assessed by the jury according to artistic criteria. Most of the projects submitted that year were animation films.

- 5 animated shorts in the "production" category and one animated feature in the "development" category were selected for evaluation.
- 15 feature-length films in the "production" category (8 dramas, 7 documentaries) and 11 in the "first works" category (7 dramas and 4 documentaries) were selected for evaluation.

Independent filmmakers are now eligible for the state funding. The FFCC juries are themselves independent professionals. In theory, they can support any type of film, but they may not support a project if it is too at odds with the values of the regime, as censorship is still very present in Cuba.

Independant production

As introduced in the first part, since the 2019 decree, producers have to be registered at the ICAIC to be able to hold a bank account for a project, hire and be hired, and have access to social security. Therefore, they do not have the status of a production company, but are officially recognized as producers in the ICAIC register and manage projects in their own names. In Cuba, there is no organization that can recognize a private company as such. When applying for international support funds, producers do so in the name of the company, but put their own name on the contract. The company is identified through the identity of the producer, even if these companies do exist and have a company name in Cuba.

For example, in the case of a co-production with a foreign company, the latter signs an agreement as co-producer:

- France: production company
- Cuba: on behalf of the director/producer

If the Cuban co-producer is a minority shareholder, it will be very difficult for them to make a cash contribution, as there are no funds to support the project in this situation. Ibermedia is the only solution for co-producing with a minority Cuban producer, but this fund has its own characteristics and restrictions.

Before the country's economic crisis, the Cuban share could exceed 50% of the total cost of the film. Today, this contribution is very limited, and is most often reduced to a contribution in local and technical expertise: equipment, infrastructure, shooting locations, or providing the know-how of technicians, actors and filmmakers.

In Cuba, it is common for the same individual to be writer, director and producer of the project, and it does not mean you can't receive foreign funding. Today, the majority of independent films are short films. Around fifty short films have been made illegally in recent years, meaning without permission to shoot and without legal responsibility.

Télévisión Serrana

Télévisión (TV) Serrana is a production company that makes short documentaries. It was originally intended to be a regional channel, but it never happened. Its funding comes from both the State and UNESCO. TV Serrana focuses on short formats as they are easier to make than feature-length films, allowing it to work more efficiently and with fewer resources. To date, it has produced over 800 films, documentaries, reports and programs. Its producers are committed to depicting the reality and living conditions of the Cuban people. Their films have already had a major impact. For example by showing the difficult daily lives of certain families who were subsequently taken in hand and rehoused. TV Serrana has already co-produced films with other Latin American countries, but never with France. However, according to Carlos Rodriguez, who worked there for twenty years, the company would be interested in such a collaboration..

FILM SUPPORT FUNDS

National funds

El Fondo de Fomento del Cine Cubano

In 2023, the ICAIC is announcing a new edition of El Fondo de Fomento del Cine Cubano for feature-length fiction, documentary and animation films.

The purpose of this fund is to support film production, in compliance with Agreement 8613 of the Council of Ministers of 14 June 2019 and with the policy approved from Decree-Law 373/2019 of the Independent Audiovisual and Cinematographic Creator. This new call for proposals is for the production of feature-length fiction, documentary and animation films.

The Fund is open to creators on the Register of Audiovisual and Cinematographic Creators, as well as recognized audiovisual and cinematographic creative organizations. This year, the candidates shortlisted by the jury will have the opportunity to defend their audiovisual projects in front of the selection committee.

The main documents, the additional documents, the registration form and the timetable can be requested by writing to the following e-mail address: fondofomentocuba@icaic.cu, or in person at the offices located at 23 calle nº1155 e/10 and 12, 8th floor, El Vedado, Plaza de la Revolución (Cuba).

The required documents will be received between 24 March and 5 May, in digital format only. They should be sent to the following address: produccionfondocuba@gmail.com

Contact: fondofomentocuba@icaic.cu for further information.

Information and documents are available on the ICAIC Telegram channel @Cubacineicaic:

[Site](#) / [Bases de production](#) / [Calendrier](#) / [Documents complémentaires](#) / [Formulaire d'inscription](#)



Some projects selected by the FFCC in 2021

Animation:

- *Bombas de arena (Sand Pumps)* directed by Keiter Castillo Santana, produced by Henry de Armas Layva. A short film about the impact of conflict on children.
- *La otra especie (The Other Species)* directed by Carolina Sánchez Rodríguez, produced by Reymel Delgado Rodriguez.

Feature films and documentaries:

- *Aquí, Ahora (Here and Now)*, documentary directed by Jonal Cosculluela Sánchez Valdés, produced by Ernesto Sánchez Valdés and Carla Valdés León.
- *El hilo rojo (The Red Son)*, drama directed by Arturo Ramón Infante Vieiro, produced by Humberto Jiménez Penha.

List of all selected project



Proyectos que pasan a comité de selección

PRODUCCIÓN

(Largometraje de ficción y documental)

- **Aquí, Ahora** Guion y dirección: Ernesto Sánchez Valdés / Producción: Ernesto Sánchez Valdés / Carla Valdés León (Documental).
- **Braúño el cartero** Dirección: Jonal Cosculluela Sánchez / Producción: Maritza Ceballos Acosta / Guion: Patricia Ramos Hernández y Jonal Cosculluela Sánchez (Ficción).
- **Contigo en la distancia** Guion y dirección: Alejandro Gutiérrez Morales y Fernando Pérez Valdés / Producción: Carlos Tomás de la Huerfa Fonseca (Documental).
- **Cubaraouis** Guion, dirección y producción: Ever Miranda Palacio (Documental)
- **El 33** Guion y dirección: Pablo Massip Ginestà / Producción: Ana María Domínguez Cruz (Documental).
- **El hilo rojo** Guion y dirección: Arturo Ramón Infante Vieiro / Producción: Humberto Jiménez Penha (Ficción).
- **El perro en el año del perro** Guion y dirección: Alejandro Suárez Castro / Producción: Yselli Vargas Olvera (Ficción).
- **El regresado** Dirección: Armando Capó Ramos / Producción: Rosa María Rodríguez Pupo / Guion: Laura Yadira Conyedo Baral y Armando Capó Ramos. (Ficción).
- **El señor de la música molida** Guion y dirección: Alejandro Valera Lora / Producción: Luis Abel Miyares Paumier (Documental).
- **Kiribati** Guion y dirección: Vladimír Cruz Mameo / Producción: Antonio Anibal López León (Ficción).
- **La paradoja de los comediantes** Guion, dirección y producción: Arturo Soffa Díaz (Ficción).
- **Molina's redemption** Dirección: Jorge Molina Enriquez / Producción: Elaine Corona Avilés / Guion: Daniel Delgado Saucedo, Gretel Giraudy García y Jorge Molina Enriquez (Ficción).
- **Para Vivir - El implocable tiempo de Pablo Milanés** Guion, dirección y producción: Fabien Hervé Piani Álvarez.
- **Serena estaba la mar** Dirección: Rigoberto Jiménez Hernández / Producción: Yoander Ballester Aguilar / Guion: Eduardo Emil Mederos y Rigoberto Jiménez Hernández (Ficción).
- **Yo también me llamo Hoydeé** Dirección: Belkis Mercedes Vega Belmonte / Producción: Ivette León Peraza / Guion: Belkis Mercedes Vega Belmonte y Fausto Ramiro del Real Orihuela (Documental).

Proyectos que pasan a comité de selección

ANIMACIÓN

(Desarrollo o Producción de largometrajes y cortometrajes)

- **Nosotros**
Guion y dirección: Lisandra López Fabé / Producción: Hanzer González Garriga.
- **Bombas de arena**
Guion y dirección: Kelter Castillo Santana / Producción: Henry de Armas Leyva.
- **Condenado a callar**
Guion, dirección y producción: José Andrés Fumero Rojas.
- **La otra especie**
Guion y dirección: Carolina Sánchez Rodríguez / Producción: Reymel Delgado Rodríguez.
- **No binario**
Dirección: Geirar Martínez Rodríguez / Producción: Danny García Soto / Guion: Daniel Delgado Saucedo y Carolina Sánchez Rodríguez.
- **Viernes 13 en La Habana**
Guion y dirección: Raydel Ricardo Araoz Valdés / Producción: Melvin Roco Oliva Vargas.

International funds

Fonds Ibermedia

The Ibero-American "IberMedia" fund was founded in 1995 at the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in San Carlos de Bariloche, Argentina. Its aim is to create an Ibero-American audiovisual area to promote integration and cultural cooperation by encouraging co-productions.

The fund supports fiction, documentary and animation films and series for production and development providing (repayable aid).

60% of the fund is allocated to co-production, 30% to training support and the remaining 10% to script development.

The fund is financed by contributions from member countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Portugal, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and Venezuela.

All these countries offer different amounts, based on its economic strength. Spain contributes around two million euros a year, making it the biggest contributor and therefore the country with the largest share of control.

However, since 2017, Cuba has no longer been able to submit applications as a majority country to the annual calls. This is due to the country no longer meets the criteria of the legal framework, particularly concerning the annual payment of a membership fee. As a result, some of the participating Cuban projects were submitted under another nationality (Spanish, Argentinean, etc. The government is determined to solve the situation in the course of 2024.

Since the first call for projects in 1998, Ibermedia has launched 30 calls for projects which have supported 1,049 co-production projects, contributed to the screening of 298 films and awarded over 2,950 training grants across all the countries of the Ibero-American community.

Ibermedia TV has created a broadcasting network made up of 19 national public channels, each featuring one film selected per week, resulting in an average of 52 films per year. A total of 416 films have been programmed to date, selected by a committee of experts from various countries.

Ibermedia NEXT is the fund dedicated to new technologies, thanks to which 14 grants have been awarded for the co-development of Ibero-American digital creation projects, worth €2,644,500 in 2022. A program dedicated to video games is currently under development.

The latest Cuban projects supported by the fund:

Supported in 2019

Puro sentimiento (Pure Feeling), a documentary directed by Gretel Medina and produced by Geraldine Orta Ramírez (Cuba), Nórمدas y Compañía SRL de C.V (Mexico).



Pitch : Initially, this was a film about the lives of three Filin (a genre derived from Cuban jazz) performers from Santa Clara. As I got closer to them, I met Maribel, another fascinating character, who was the companion of Lucía Labastida, one of these three filin singers. I ended up falling in love with them and the project turned into a character film and a portrait of their relationship as a couple.

In a way, the love story told in the film is tragic and yet endearing. And in that sense, there was no other way to approach them than to try to understand, to surrender to what was revealed to me. I believe that this rawness, this intimacy intertwined with drama, embodies the spirit of the film.

El Mundo de Nelsito (The World of Nelsito), a fiction directed by Fernando Pérez and produced by ICAIC and Wanda Visión S.A (Spain). It received support in 2019.

Pitch : An accident. The victim is Nelsito, a 16-year-old autistic teenager who ran away. From his stretcher and through his imaginary pen, Nelsito reveals the dark and hidden side of all those around him: perverse children, murderous women, adorable scamming girls... Now recovered, Nelsito will be welcomed by his characters, who have become simple, real, daily, and true neighbors. Each character has their own conflicts in each of the five stories told in the movie. But how to distinguish the real characters from those that Nelsito imagined? Fernando Pérez cleverly cultivates this ambiguity.



Agosto (August), a fiction drama directed by Armando Capó and produced by La Féria Producciones (Costa Rica) and Paraíso Production diffusion (France). (The film was) Supported in 2016.

Pitch : Cuba, summer 1994. In the midst of one of the biggest crises in the country's history, thousands of Cubans try to reach the United States illegally, not knowing if they will survive. As the holidays begin, Carlos enters a summer of blitheness, walking with his friends and falling in love for the first time. Little does he know that the country's future is uncertain, until little by little his neighbors and friends leave in search of a better life, friendships are broken and families drift apart. Carlos' world is about to be turned upside down.



This is the most prestigious award in the Ibero-American community for Best Screenplay. This pre-production support fund is intended for project that have a script, particularly those seeking a producer. Carlos Lechuga's *Santa y Andrés (Santa and Andrés)* won the prize, worth 50,000 euros at that time. The call for entries is open exclusively to SGAE-affiliated authors, regardless of nationality.

To apply, all the required documents must be emailed to the following address: iarmada@fundacionsgae.org, with "XXI SGAE Julio Alejandro Screenplay Prize - 'Title of work for the competition'" in the subject line.

The jury, made up of authors and film professionals, selects three finalists who compete for a prize of €25,000. The other two finalists each receive €3,500. The winner is announced at a public ceremony in the first quarter of the year following the selection. Submissions for 2023 were accepted until November 30th.

In 2024, the foundation has selected 30 films as finalists for the 38th Goya Awards, in collaboration with the Film Academy.

- *Un Amor (One Love)* by Isabel Coixet, 2023, 127'
- *Robot Dreams (Rêves de robot)* by Pablo Berge, 2023, 102'
- *Esta ambición desmedida (This Overwhelming Ambition)* by Cris Trenas, Santos Bacana, Rogelio González, 2023, 118'

The screenings take place from 20 to 23 March 2024.

Aide aux cinémas du monde (ACM)



Aide aux cinémas du monde (ACM) is a scheme dedicated to foreign cinema. It was set up by the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in conjunction with the Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée (CNC) and the Institut français. This fund is reserved for feature-length fiction, animation and documentary projects which have a theatrical release previous to any TV or platform broadcast. Open to all countries, this selective aid can be granted before production (production support) or after production (granted to projects that weren't selected for pre-production support). The aim is to make it easier and more attractive for foreign filmmakers and professionals to work with a french co-producer.

The film must be co-produced by a production company established outside of France and a French one. Its director must be foreign (or, exceptionally, a French director if the shooting language is not French) and the majority of the film must be shot outside French territory. The language may be the official language(s) or the language(s) in use in the foreign country(ies) of which the director is a national or those of the territory of filming. Pre-production support must be requested before the shoot begins and post-production support must be submitted by the French production company and only concerns projects that were not selected for pre-production support.

Aide aux Cinémas du Monde is made up of three commissions:

- 1st Committee: dedicated to pre-production support for first and second feature-length films.
- 2nd Committee: dedicated to pre-production support for works by directors who have already made at least two feature-length films.
- 3rd Committee: examines applications for post-production support.

Since February 2024, the ACM has required greater artistic and technical involvement from French producers, including a certain amount that must be spent in France.

The amount granted is capped at €250,000 for pre-production support and €50,000 for post-production support. It may not exceed 50% of the financing provided by the French co-producer (80% for first and second feature films by a director or films with a budget of less than €1,250,000 or low-resource countries including Cuba). The new reform of the ACM in 2024 has had the effect of increasing the fund's limit and territorial spending obligations (from 50% to 60% of the amount of aid). The amount of the increase isn't known yet.

In 2023, 56 projects received support totalling €6,125,000 (approximately €109,475 per project). Since its creation in 2012, 571 projects have been supported. The directors represent 107 different nationalities.

Cuba is on the list of countries with the most fragile film industries. Directors and producers from this country therefore benefit from exceptional measures:

- A foreign producer may apply for Aide aux cinémas du monde without having signed a contract with a French co-producer;
- In the case of a film co-produced with a production company established in that country, production expenses must be least 25% of the amount granted.

Two Cuban films supported by l'Aide aux cinémas du monde

***El Acompañante* (The Companion),**

Directed by Pavel Giroud,
produced by Tu Vas Voir.

In 2014, the film was granted a 150 000 euros *aide avant réalisation* (pre-shooting production support fund) by the CNC selection committee that examines third feature films.

Pitch : Cuba, 1986. Horacio Romero, a boxer accused of doping, is sent to escort Daniel, a young soldier who has contracted AIDS during a mission in Africa.



***Obra de choque* (Shock Labor)**

Directed by Marcos Díaz Sosa,
produced by Petit Film.

In 2019, the film was granted a 80 000 euros *aide avant réalisation* (pre-shooting production support) in the first feature films section.

Pitch : In 1988, A Cuban female skeet shooter, with supernatural marksmanship, regrets that she will soon have a child on the isolated farm where she lives. After a tornado carries her away to a touristy small island, where an admirer of her talent offers her a luxury life, she learns that there's no place like home.

Hubert Bals Fund

The Hubert Bals Fund was created in 1988 as part of the Rotterdam International Film Festival. It is dedicated to feature-length films by innovative filmmakers in developing countries, that address an urgent and specific situation. It is intended for filmmakers from Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America, but also for filmmakers that currently live in a non-eligible country and are part of a diaspora, with the overall aim of supporting cultural diversity.



Hubert Bals Fund

These cash grants are allocated at various stages of the process: scriptwriting, project development, post-production and distribution costs in the film's country of origin. Once completed, the film benefits from a preview screening at the Rotterdam Film Festival. In order to qualify, films must have a budget under 3 million euros. Since the creation of the fund, over 1,100 projects by independent filmmakers have been supported, including several Cuban filmmakers. Among them are Carlos Lechuga, who won the HBF Award for *Santa y Andres* (2016) and Carlos Quintela, who received post-production support for *La obra del siglo* (2015).



Santa y Andrés (Santa and Andrés) by Carlos Lechuga

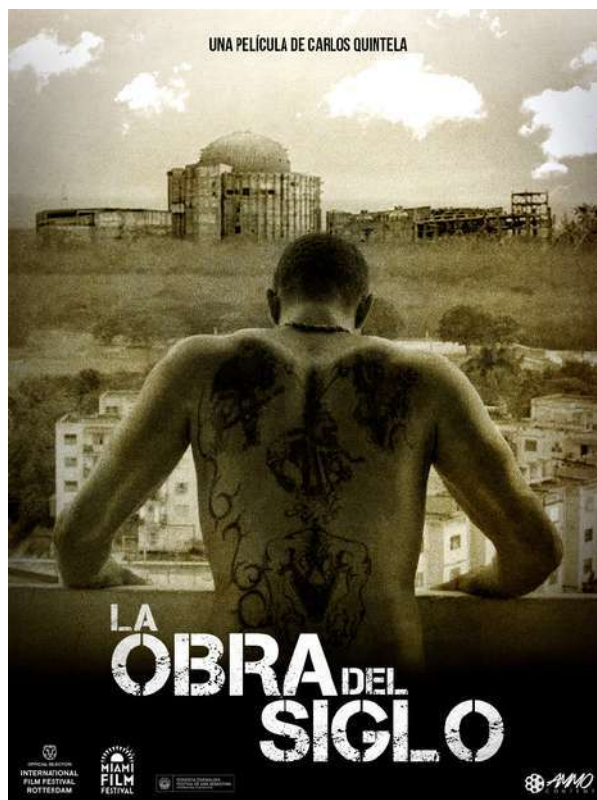
Pitch : Cuba, 1983. Santa, a lonely country girl, is sent to keep an eye on Andrés, a gay writer in whom the Revolution has little “confidence”. Gradually these two people, apparently so very different from one another, realise that the things that bring them together are more important than those that separate them.

The film is inspired by the life of the Cuban poet Delfin Prats and other homosexual intellectuals, such as Virgilio Piñera, who faced repression from the Castro regime in the 1970s. The director of the Cuban Institute of Arts and Cinematographic Industry, Roberto Smith, banned “Santa y Andrés” from the 2016 International Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana, in which it was originally supposed to compete.

La obra del siglo (The work of the century)

by Carlos Quintela

Pitch : In the midst of a mosquito invasion, Leonardo, struggling with the break-up of his marriage, moves in with his grandfather, who fights against everything and everyone, and a father who lives in the melancholy of unfinished business. In a town once destined to become the centre of the Soviet nuclear project in the Caribbean, the meagre remnants of that world weigh heavily on these three lonely men who, unlike their fish Benjamin, have not yet learned to breathe underwater.



Go Cuba !

**FESTIVAL
WORLD
CINEMA
AMSTERDAM
GO CUBA!**

This fund was developed by the World Cinema Amsterdam Festival in 2015, to help first-time Cuban filmmakers make films with independent productions. The festival is organised and held at the Rialto Theatre in Amsterdam during the month of August.

Every year, an average of five short fiction, documentary or animation films and two feature films are supported by the fund. The budget allocated includes the costs of promoting and distributing the films.

Applications can only be made by a Cuban director living in Cuba. Funding for short audiovisual projects (up to 15 minutes) is a maximum of €2,644 per production and €356 per post-production/presentation, i.e. €3,000 per short film. For feature-length films, the fund offers a maximum of €5,500 per production and €5,500 for post-production and presentation, i.e. €11,000 per project.

A selection committee meets to examine the feasibility and budget of each project. Emphasis is placed on young filmmakers whose subjects reflect current and local issues. There is also a particular focus on women directors, given the low presence of women in Cuban cinema. Projects must also be international in scope, while having an impact on the Cuban audiovisual sector and film environment.

The Cuban director selected must submit a final account containing a summary and proof of the expenses incurred. The World Cinema Amsterdam foundation will check this final account and, if necessary, request additional information or supporting documents. For full details of the application forms, go to <https://worldcinemaamsterdam.nl/en/go-cuba>

One of the latest projects supported by the fund:

Bongó Itá (documentary)

directed by Mayckell Pedrero Mariol,
released in 2022

Pitch : A rare look at the Abakuá, an Afro-Cuban religious brotherhood that has been hidden from outsiders until recently. A symbol of resistance for over 200 years, Abakuá society has managed to survive slavery, Spanish domination and the Revolution, despite all the prejudice and misunderstandings about its traditions and rituals.



Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects (FSPI)

The Fonds de Solidarité pour les Projets Innovants (FSPI) "**Support for new cinemas and the Cuban film industry**" meets the needs of Havana and Cuba for structures to distribute their works. It is therefore intended to finance bilateral operations as part of France's official development assistance. Up until now, this fund has been developed in nearly 70 countries, and this is the first time it has been applied to the Cuban film industry.



It has two components: support for independent creation via the FFCC (ICAIC Independent Film Support Fund) and support for internationalisation by setting up a Franco-Cuban network. Each project lasts two years and has a budget of between €100,000 and €1 million. The FSPI Cinema also aims to support the winners of the Fund for the Promotion of Cuban Cinema: directors, scriptwriters and producers. It is therefore an important source of support for independent cinema and for filmmakers on the register of audiovisual and cinematographic creators.

The Fund for the Promotion of Cuban Cinema promotes the development and diversity of the cinematographic arts. It supports cinema creation and production by giving selected projects access to financial resources for both the development and post-production of fiction, documentary and animation projects. To apply for the promotion fund, you do not necessarily have to be registered as a filmmaker. For example, Miguel Coyula received support for the selection of his film *Corazón Azul* (Blue Heart) by a film festival in France (Marseille). The idea of the FSPI Cinéma is to strengthen the links between Cuban and French cinema, regardless of the status of the filmmaker or their residence (in Cuba or abroad). Workshops as part of the FSPI Cinéma are organised through the Festival du Cinéma Français à Cuba, in collaboration with the Cinemania association (founder of the festival), the Docmonde association and the French Embassy in Cuba.

The FSPI organises various types of action:

- **Funding for residencies abroad:** "Casa Cine" in Mandelieu-La-Napoule during the Cannes Film Festival, a writing residency at the Moulin d'Andé in France and a writing residency organised by the Cinélatino festival in Toulouse.
- **La Casa Velazquez:** Professional meetings for Cuban filmmakers and producers living in exile in Spain, with round tables, lunches and screenings.
- **Workshops and Labs at festivals in France:** CultureLab at the La Rochelle festival, BAL-LAB at the Biarritz Latin America Festival, Jump'In at the Poitiers Film Festival (school film festival), Cinéma en construction and Cinéma en développement at the Cinélatino festival in Toulouse.
- **Cuban stands at festivals in France:** Cuban delegation at the Cannes Film Market in 2023, Cuban stand at the Clermont-Ferrand International Short Film Festival in 2023 and 2024.
- **Workshops and professional platforms in Cuba with French professionals:** various production, sound and photography workshops have been set up at the EICTV, support for Nuevas Miradas (a platform for professional meetings alongside the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema) in December.
- **Academic partnerships:** Participation of a filmmaker in the Fémis Summer University this summer and of 3 Cuban students in the Gobelins Summer School (July to September 2023).
- **More broadly:** Help with translating presentation files in response to calls for projects from festivals, subtitling films for screening at festivals abroad, organising stays in France or abroad if selected for a festival or workshop...
- **Pitch:** The Festival International du Films documentaire Amazonie Caraïbes (FIFAC) in Saint-Laurent du Maroni in French Guiana invites writers authors to present their projects in the form of a pitch before having a one-to-one discussion with producers and distributors. The aim is to facilitate meetings between the writers authors and the various players in the film and audiovisual industry around these projects. In 2022, Docmonde Amazonie Caraïbe, in partnership with the AcampaDoc Festival in Panama, organised a workshop in Havana, with the support of the French Embassy in Cuba. This helped to identify film projects in development and to invite authors to take part in the co-production meetings during the FIFAC. In June 2023, the project development workshop in Cuba was organised by Docmonde on the EICTV premises. In October 2023, Cuba was the guest country at the FIFAC, with the support of the FSPI Cinéma for the participation of Cuban filmmakers in the competition, co-production and meeting of film festival directors from the Caribbean region, notably with Sergio Benvenuto Solas as director of the Gibara International Film Festival.

A number of French festivals have welcomed Cuban filmmakers, including the Toulouse Cinélatino Festival, Biarritz Latin America Festival, FIFAC in French Guiana, Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival, Cannes Festival, La Rochelle Festival, FID Marseille and FIPADOC.

The FSPI Cinéma also has other tools to help Cuban film production, such as the support fund for co-production and co-development projects between France and Cuba (and by extension Cubans living in exile in Europe), worth €3,000 for short films and €5,000 for feature films. In 2023, 8 projects were supported (3 short films and 5 feature films).

Two examples of films supported

Obra de choque (*Shock Labor*) by Marcos Diaz Sosa co-produced by Marinca films (whose producer Maria Carla del Rio is exiled in Spain) and Petit film (France).

Pitch: In the socialist Cuba of 1988, a young romantic nurse doesn't want to give birth to her child in the town where she lives, but after a tornado sweeps her away to a vast luxury resort, she realizes that there's no place like home.



El Señor de la música molida (*The Lord of the Earth-Music*) is a feature-length documentary directed by Alejandro Valera Losa and produced by Luis Abel Miyares Paumier (Alta Habana Audiovisuales) and SLYKS (France).

Pitch: This documentary tells the origins and history of the Oriental Organ, a musical instrument classified as a national cultural heritage of Cuba. A journey through the eastern area of the island. The documentary presents the different indigenous cultural expressions, spaces and traditions that are unique to this region. The film also focuses on the risks of disappearance of this traditional instrument in Cuba



Sørfond

The Southern Film Support Fund « Sørfond », was created in 2011 by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, following an initiative by of the Festival Films from the South Festival. This fund stems from a direct collaboration with the Muestra Joven Habanera, in particular Yumey Besú, the main incubator for future filmmakers. The idea is to support production in countries where it is limited for political, financial or social reasons. The fund is managed by the Norwegian Film Institute, which distributes the various grants between fiction and documentary projects from Asia, Africa and Latin America (DAC countries).



The fund grants production aid to a film whose lead producer is established in an OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) country and territory eligible for official development assistance. It is aimed at projects with strong themes that challenge social and cultural values. The majority of expenditure must also take place in the developing country.

In 2023, the fund received 45 projects and selected 15. These projects were selected for their engaging themes centered on immigration, dystopian realities, feminism or queer themes.

Latest Cuban project supported:

Candelaria, fiction by Jhonny Hendrix Hinestroza, a co-production between Colombia (Antorcha Films), Argentina (Pucará Cine), Germany (Razor Film Produktion), Cuba (Producciones de la 5ta Avenida), Norway (Dag Hoel) and France (Fidelio Production), broadcast in 2017.



Pitch : Havana, Cuba, 1994. Candelaria and Victor Hugo, a married couple, love each other deeply, but Cuba's harsh economic realities weigh heavily on their daily lives. A dark color palette and a mostly static camera accentuate the impression of a society that is making little headway, but things change for the better when Candelaria finds a camera in the hotel where she works.

This discovery literally lights up Candelaria and Victor's lives. They start using the camera to document their lives and what's going on around them, and through the lens, they also begin to see each other in a new light. Their relationship blossoms, and their minds can focus on something other than the dark realities around them. When the camera is stolen, Victor ventures into Havana's criminal district, El Hormiguero, to retrieve it.

World Cinema Fund (Germany)

Founded in 2004, the World Cinema Fund (WCF) was launched by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Berlin International Film Festival. The WCF supports the production, post-production and distribution of creative feature films and documentaries from Latin America, the Caribbean, the Pacific, Africa, the Middle East, Central, Asia and Southeast Asia



The aim is to support projects from regions with weak film infrastructures, while promoting cultural diversity in German cinemas. As such, the fund supports collaboration between German and European producers and partners in the WCF regions and countries.

Cuban projects supported by the fund:



CUBA, 2015

Director: Carlos Machado Quintela
Producers: Rizoma Film (Argentina), Uranio Films (Cuba), Rapsberry & Cream (Germany)
German WCF partner: Rapsberry & Cream
World sales: M-Appeal (Germany)

Funded in the WCF Jury meeting in November 2013
Funding amount: 35.000 €

CUBA

Director: Marcos Diaz Sosa
Producers: Marinca Filmes (Cuba), Petit Film (France), Gema Films (Argentina), Cinevinay (Mexico)
European WCF partner: Petit Film (France)
World sales: tbc

Funded in the WCF Jury meeting in November 2019
Funding amount: 25.000 €



Hermanos Saíz Association

Founded in 1986, the association will be presenting the 32nd edition of the "El Almacén de la Imagen" festival in Camagüey, in Cuba. The festival has been hosting screenplay pitching sessions since 2009, as well as the international Sparring Partners program dedicated to documentaries. The purpose of the festival is to bring together professionals from the sector.



Projects can be submitted in the following audiovisual genres or categories: fiction, documentary, animation (up to 3 minutes) or promotional film (sports, microvideos, music videos). Since 2023, animation projects up to 5 minutes long can be submitted in script form. For animated shorts, the budget is set at 7,000 pesos, and for fiction shorts (up to 27 minutes), the budget is 80,000 pesos.

Entries must be delivered in digital form to one of the Hermanos Saíz Association offices in the country, together with the entry form (downloadable here www.ahs.cu).

The jury is made up of personalities from the audiovisual world, who award the "Luces de la Ciudad" (City Lights) Grand Prize of 25,000 pesos to the best production, regardless of genre.

Prizes are also awarded for each of the following professions: Directing, Screenwriting, Photography, Editing, Art Direction, Sound, Original Music and Production.

During the event, activities take place both in person and virtually, such as conferences, workshops, side exhibitions and meetings with renowned audiovisual creators.

Contact : elalmacendelaimagen@gmail.com

The 2023 edition took place in the Nicolas Guillén Hall of the Morro Cabaña Complex, as part of the 31st Havana International Book Fair .

The 2023 winners :

- **Essay:** Luis Emilio Aybar Toledo, for the work *La ideología revolucionaria en el trabajo. Una mirada desde el sector industrial (1961-1965)* (Revolutionary ideology at work. A view from the industrial sector (1961-1965))
- **Children and youth:** Giselle Lucía Navarro Delgado, for *Un niño perfecto* (A perfect child)
- **Poetry:** Onel Pérez Izaguirre, for *Cables de Alta Tensión* (High Voltage Cables)
- **Theatre:** Juan Edilberto Sosa Torres, for *El subterráneo* (The Underground)
- **Fiction:** Martha Acosta Álvarez, for *Refugiados* (Refugees)
- **Narration:** Rubiel Alejandro González Labarta, for *Salvajes y dichosos* (Wild and happy)

For further information, please refer to the appendix, which includes a table listing all international grants and funds, as well as a list of producers residing in Cuba and elsewhere.

HOW TO COPRODUCE WITH CUBA

Equipment and filming permits in Cuba

Cuban technical teams are competent, and line production is efficient, not least because filmmakers and technicians are well trained at the International Film and Television School in San Antonio de los Baños.

There are also shooting studios in Cuba, but according to Félix Salgado Lopez, their use is difficult, given their condition: *"In Cuba, there are some 'incredible' studios, but everything has been left in a catastrophic state due to lack of maintenance. No one has tried to preserve them at all. The studios are practically ruined, abandoned... The question arises as to who will continue to make films."*

Filming permits are mandatory, especially when shooting in a sensitive location, i.e. one where the building being filmed is government property, as is the case for many of them.

However, it is not uncommon for films to be shot without having applied for authorization, particularly if it is known in advance that the film will not be well received by the authorities. The risk is that authorization will be refused, making it impossible to film in a "pirate" fashion once the authorities' attention has been drawn to it. If the authorities carry out a control, they have the power to confiscate the equipment in the absence of a permit.

Visas and money transfers

It's quite a challenge to send money to Cuba, mainly because of the U.S. embargo. Moreover, the exchange rate is very high due to the current economic crisis. However, producers are full of resources to avoid the devaluation of the money, such as FonMoney, which lets you transfer money to accounts in Cuba. In order to use this transfer system, you need to enter the beneficiary's details and indicate the amount you wish to send to the account. The amount sent to the recipient account will be indicated immediately. However, if the money enters the Cuban banking system, it may be complicated to retrieve it in time, particularly as the authorized withdrawal threshold is in the tens of euros, as the country does not have sufficient liquidity.

However, it's common practice to change money on the street, as the rate is much more attractive. For 1 euro, you get 120 Cuban pesos at official exchange offices, whereas you can get 320 on the street. Cubans also prefer to hold both euros and dollars, it makes it easier for them to pay abroad.

To get around these rate issues, it's also possible to make remote payments from abroad, to book hotels and the like. However, this involves bank fees.

If part of the crew has to be flown in from abroad, especially if the film is not well received by the regime, tourist visas should be used to avoid drawing attention to the project. It is possible to convert a tourist visa into a work or cultural visa (which is still officially required for filming) by contacting the ICAIC or ICRT. A fee is charged for this procedure, and the visa applicant must be accompanied by the Cuban producer, who will act as the guarantee for the foreign director or technician.

Cuba has sufficient technical equipment, but if you want to bring a camera into the country, it can't be a movie camera. For drones, it is necessary to request authorization from the Ministry of Communication. In Cuba, there is a strong culture of bypassing restrictions and controls (which are permanent).

Other filming equipment resources

Other state institutions, such as film schools, get involved in projects by providing filming equipment, editing tools, advice and more. The two main institutions, which feature in many short and feature-length films, are the International Film and Television School of San Antonio de Los Baños (EICTV) and the Higher Institute of the Arts (ISA), with its Faculty of Audiovisual Media Arts (FAMCA).

Fiction

Vicenta B

de Carlos Lechuga

Produce by Claudia Calviño, Cacha Films

77 minutes

Synopsis

Lately, Havana seems to be an empty city. All you see on its streets are lonely mothers and grandmothers, as in those war stories where all the sons have left. In Cuba, the war came in the form of emigration, with everyone leaving in search of a better future. Vicenta Bravo is a 45-year-old Cuban woman with a special gift for reading people's futures by throwing cards. Every day, she welcomes people into her home who are facing all kinds of difficulties and are looking for a solution. Vicenta and her son live together harmoniously until he too decides to leave the country.



Carlos Lechuga

Carlos Lechuga is a Cuban director and screenwriter. After his first film, *Melaza* (2013), his second feature film, *Santa y Andrés* (2016), presented at numerous festivals, sparked intense debate in his country for having been officially banned by the Cuban authorities. Although it has never been shown publicly on the island until now, it is considered a benchmark of Cuban independent cinema.

Fiche film

Pays	Cuba
Pays de coproduction	Colombie, France, Norvège
Pays de tournage	Cuba
Année	2022
Durée	1h17
Type	Fiction (Drame)
Producteur/trice	Claudia Calviño
Coproducteurs/trices	Samuel Chauvin, Julie Goldman, Christopher Clements, Consuelo Castillo, Dag Hoel, Carlos Lechuga
Distribution France	Bobine Films

Team

- Scenario : Fabián Suárez, Carlos Lechuga
- Picture : Denise Guerra
- Sound : Velia Díaz de Villalvilla
- Post production: Joanna Montero
- Interpretation : Linnett Hernández Valdés, Mireya Chapman, Aimée Despaigne, Ana Flavia Ramos, Pedro Martínez, Eduardo Martíne

Festivals nominations

- Cartagena International Film Festival (FICCI) - Colombia, 2023
- Warsaw Film Festival - Poland, 2022
- Chicago International Film Festival - United States, 2022
- San Sebastián International Film Festival (SFIFF) - Spain, 2022
- TIFF (Toronto International Film Festival) - Canada, 2022
- French premiere at Festival Biarritz Amérique Latine - Official selection in competition
- Cinélatino - France, 2023

Fundings

VICENTA B. by Carlos Lechuga		Producers Name: Claudia Calviño / Samuel Chauvin / Consuelo Castillo		
		Countries: Cuba - France - Colombia		Date: January 5th, 2021
Financing Source		Project Title: VICENTA B		Budget: EUR 484,143
		SECURED Amount - 69 %		€ 334,143
		PENDING Amount - 31 %		€ 150,000
Financing Source	Amount	%	Status	
Country: CUBA_Producciones de la 5ta Avenida				
GoCuba! (Fund, production support)	\$ 12,144.00	€ 11,040.00	2.28%	Confirmed - April 2019
Guadalajara Film Festival Award (cash award Development)	\$ 12,815.00	€ 11,650.00	2.41%	Confirmed - March 2017
Habanero Film Sales (Sales MG)	\$ 27,500.00	€ 25,000.00	5.16%	Confirmed - March 2019
World Cinema Fund (Production Support)	\$ 55,000.00	€ 50,000.00	10.33%	Applied / decision by June 2021
IBERMEDIA (Fund, coproduction support)	\$ 40,049.00	€ 36,408.18	7.52%	Confirmed - December 2020
Fondo Fomento al Cine Cubano (National Fund production support)	\$ 180,000.00	€ 163,636.36	33.80%	Confirmed - December 2020
Subtotals	\$ 327,508.00	€ 297,734.55	61%	
Country: FRANCE_Promenades Films				
Aide aux cinémas du monde (production support)	\$ 110,000.00	€ 100,000.00	20.66%	To apply / decision by June 2021
Région Sud: Provence - Alpes - Cote D'Azur (regional production support)	\$ 11,000.00	€ 10,000.00	2.07%	Confirmed - July 2020
Subtotals	\$ 121,000.00	€ 110,000.00	23%	
Country: COLOMBIA_ROMEO: Laboratorio + Películas S.A.S.				
2:35 Digital (in kind investment_sound + image post)	\$ 44,000.00	€ 40,000.00	8.26%	Confirmed - April 2019
IBERMEDIA (Fund, coproduction support)	\$ 40,049.00	€ 36,408.18	7.52%	Confirmed - December 2020
Subtotals	\$ 84,049.00	€ 76,408.18	16%	
TOTALS	CUC 532,557	EUR 484,143	100.00%	

Currency Exchange Rates	1 CUC (Cuba)	= 1 USD
Currency Exchange Rates	1 CUC (Cuba)	= 0.91 EURO

Note: only funding marked as "confirmed" has been received. The film also obtained from the Norwegian aid fund (which amounts to around 10,000 euros). The film's actual budget was thus 344,143 euros. As the movie was refused the CNC's "Aide aux cinémas du monde", the French share is considerably reduced, amounting to 3% of the film's budget. It should be noted that the various devaluations of the Cuban currency may have led to fluctuations in the money actually available for the film's production.

Besides the Guaranteed Minimum from Habanero Film Sales - the film's International Sales company, founded and directed by Alfredo Calvino and now based in Brazil - the film is funded solely by various funds. There has been no pre-purchase by a foreign broadcaster, and pre-sale to a Cuban distributor is not possible in Cuba, as the ICAIC is responsible for the national distribution of films.

The movie's numerous festival nominations have helped it to gain international recognition. Following the San Sebastian festival, French distributor Bobines Films bought the rights to the film.

Co-production companies:

- Promenades Films (France),
- Motto Pictures (United States),
- Romeo (Colombia),
- Dag Hoel Filmproduksjon (Norway)

Dag Hoel Porduksjon made it possible to obtain Norwegian aid funds. Most of the Norwegian funds must be spent in the country of production.

Promenade Films had already co-produced two films by Carlos Lechuga: *Santa y Andres (Santa and Andrés)* (2016) and *Melaza* (2013). This company, co-founded by Samuel Chauvin and François Lunel, specializes in co-productions with Latin America. They have been awarded a production grant from the PACA region.

Nota Bene : Promenades Films' contribution is injected in the form of industry, notably because of the difficulties of transferring money. For example, Sunset Vision, the main Cuban rental company for filming equipment, also has a company in Spain, which enabled Promenades Films to be invoiced by the Spanish company, not the Cuban one.

DISTRIBUTION

3

STATE OF PLAY: CUBAN FESTIVALS

In Cuba, festivals play an essential role in the cultural landscape, providing a platform for both professionals and the general public. These events, whether national, regional or international in scope, contribute to the island's artistic richness, highlighting the diversity of its cultural and cinematographic expressions. **Festivals such as Havana's International Festival of New Latin American Cinema, the Gibara Festival, and the Santiago Álvarez in Memoriam Festival**, among others, attract participants from all over the globe, reinforcing Cuba's place as a center of cultural and creative exchange.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the festival calendar in Cuba, as in the rest of the world. The health restrictions necessary to contain the spread of the virus have led to the cancellation or postponement of many planned events, affecting not only creators and professionals in the film and cultural industry, but also the public eager for these artistic encounters. **The situation has been exacerbated by the growing economic challenges facing the country**, putting further pressure on the resources available for organizing and staging such festivals.

The global health crisis has revealed the fragility of the structures supporting festivals in Cuba, prompting organizers to explore new methods of maintaining the continuity of these important events. Solutions include adapting to virtual or hybrid formats, such as the initiative led by José Luis Aparicio and Katherine Bisquet. An alternative, despite the difficulties of connecting to Cuba, enabling remote participation while respecting health safety measures. These innovative approaches have kept the flame of Cuban culture and cinema alive, even in times of crisis.

Despite these efforts, the impact of the pandemic and the economic crisis on Cuba's cultural sector is undeniable. Interruptions and cancellations of festivals have not only limited opportunities for artists to present their work, but have also reduced the spaces for dialogue and cultural exchange essential for artistic development. These challenges underline the importance of supporting the cultural sector, recognizing the vital role festivals play in fostering cultural diversity and building a resilient social fabric.



Photo : Gabriel G.Bianchini

The ICAIC Young Show/Muestra Joven (Exposition Jeunesse de l'ICAIC), formerly the Muestra Nacional de Nuevos Realizadores (National Exhibition of New Directors), an annual event organized by the ICAIC to showcase Cuban filmmakers under the age of 35, has disappeared. This festival, among others, was an essential space for young Cuban directors, providing a space to showcase their work and exchange ideas. His passing marks a significant loss for Cuba's film community, highlighting the challenges facing the sector in a difficult economic context.

In spite of everything, **Cuban cinema continues to thrive**, thanks in no small part to the commitment and creativity of key industry figures. In this instance, in addition to being privileged moments for the dissemination of films and for meetings between professionals in the sector, it is vital to recognize the importance of festivals as spaces for discussion around the film industry itself. The country's recent situation has also seen the emergence of a new dynamic to highlight the voice of audiovisual professionals through sector assemblies.

In this context, the concerns raised at the last Assembly of Cuban Cinematographers resonate particularly strongly. Discussions on film production, censorship, "cultural colonization" and access to cinema spaces are crucial to understanding the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary Cuban cinema. The drafting of a cinema law, aimed at creating a more favorable environment for the production, distribution and consumption of films in Cuba, for example, reflects a desire to

strengthen the sector and ensure its long-term viability. These efforts to address structural problems and promote diversity and innovation in Cuban cinema are evidence of the changes that are possible. The intention to relaunch important festivals, such as Muestra Joven, and to support new talent through workshops and production funds demonstrates a desire to revitalize the Cuban cinematographic landscape.

The future of Cuban cinema therefore seems to be at a junction, where the festival tradition and aspirations for a more inclusive and expressive sector converge. Festivals will continue to be a major aspect of this transformation, serving at once as spaces for screening, meeting places, as well as forums for debating and shaping the future of cinema in Cuba. By embracing both heritage and innovation, Cuban cinema can aspire to a new era of creativity and cultural dialogue.

More than anything else, this festival activity demonstrates Cuba's determination to maintain a vibrant and dynamic film scene despite economic difficulties, and also reaffirms Cuba's significant role on the international cultural scene. Over the generations, Cuba's film festivals have always served as catalysts for creators, providing a space where cinematic passions and personal creations intertwine. Characterized by their independence and authenticity, these festivals reflect the Cuban spirit and the diversity of filmmakers, both on the island and abroad.

The recent situation in the country has seen the emergence of a dynamic of audiovisual professionals, through industry sector assemblies.



Crowd in front of the Milan hall during the Havana festival.
By Jean-Michel Gramond

An overview of the main festivals

As one of emblematic festivals, **Havana's Festival International du Nouveau Cinéma Latino Américain** shines particularly brightly. For its 44th edition, from January 8 to 17, 2023, under the direction of Lourdes de los Santos, it offered a rich program covering fiction, documentary and animation in renowned cinemas such as Charles Chaplin, La Rampa, 23 Y 12, Acapulco, Riviera and Yara.

Despite the fact that **this festival, like others in Cuba has no film market**, but its influence and convening power encourage exchanges between actors, scriptwriters, producers and technicians from all over Latin America, mainly at Cuba's Hotel National, with accreditation costing around 60 euros.

The Cuban French Film Festival, demonstrates the popularity of French cinema all over the island, with an average attendance of between 60,000 and 100,000 spectators per edition. It has been organized jointly by the French Embassy, the Alliance Française in Cuba, the Cuban Cinematheque, Cinémanie and the ICAIC since 1998. The festival is characterized by the diversity of its programming, which is both eclectic and accessible (heritage films, auteur films, animated films, shorts, documentaries, etc.). It is shown in several cinemas and several provinces in addition to Havana, as well as the presence (in normal times) of leading figures in French cinema. The festival gives pride of place to new releases (films 4 years old or less) as well as a retrospective devoted to an emblematic filmmaker (the last edition honoured Costa-Gavras). The festival has not been held since 2022, but we can imagine it being held again in the future, given the close cultural ties between the two countries and the activities of the French embassy there, as evidenced by the French participation in the last Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana and the Francophonie month organized from 3 to 28 March this year.

Festival Santiago Álvarez in Memoriam, scheduled from March 1 to 8, 2024 in Santiago, is a perfect example of this resilience. Dedicated to the memory of renowned Cuban documentary filmmaker Santiago Álvarez, it invites documentary filmmakers, intellectuals, cineasts and enthusiasts from around the world to come together to celebrate the genre, and aims to stimulate film creation, encourage debate on film and explore the realities of documentary.

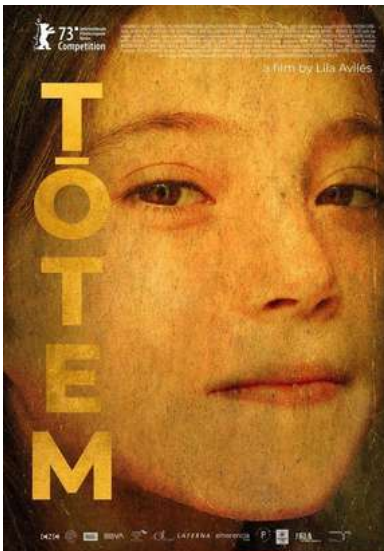
The Caribbean International Film and Environment Festival - The Caribbean International Film and Environment Festival - Isla Verde, is an initiative to promote ecological awareness and action in the Caribbean region. Located on the Isla de la Juventud, the festival is part of an environmental program working to transform the region towards sustainable development. At the heart of the event is the ambition to create an enriching dialogue between international audiovisual works and local initiatives, highlighting environmental issues and solutions relevant to the region. By integrating conferences and workshops led by experts in key fields such as sustainable tourism, agroecology, and green economic models, the festival actively engages participants and audiences in collective reflection and interdisciplinary learning. The festival's aspiration to become a model of environmental communication for the region is reflected in its commitment to eco-responsible practices, aiming to minimize its ecological footprint through zero waste and low CO2 emission initiatives. Ultimately, Isla Verde aims to be more than a film festival; it aspires to be a movement towards sustainable social change, encouraging a more harmonious relationship between man and his environment in the Caribbean and beyond.

Among the best films exhibited at the 44th Festival International du Nouveau Cinéma Latino-Américain de La Havane were three with ties to France.



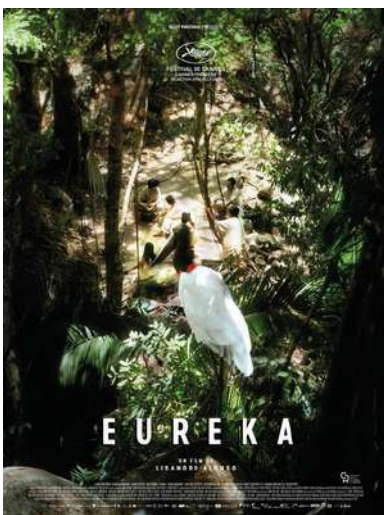
Les colons, produce by Quijote Films (Chili) and coproduce by Ciné-Sud Promotion (France)

A co-production: Chile (70%), France (30%), Denmark, Taiwan, Sweden, United Kingdom



Totem, movie produce by Paloma Production (Danemark)

A French minority co-production (Alpha Violet) (Mexico, Denmark, France)



Eureka, movie produce by Slot machine (France)

A co-production between: France (30.61%), Germany (20.15%), Mexico (20.0%), Argentina (10.0%), Portugal (19.24%)

TELEVISION

Cuban television was born in 1950. Cuba is the first country to have television in the Caribbean and the second in Latin America. It was created when two radio stations, Union Radio and then CMQ, decided to expand into television, founding Unión Radio TV and CMQ-TV. CMQ-TV, with more resources, offered a wide variety of programmes: entertainment shows, news and drama. First introduced in Havana, it quickly spread throughout the country. The competition between the two channels led to the rapid development of programmes on this new medium, and programmes were exported throughout Latin America.

By 1958, Cuba had 25 transmitters with 3 national channels: CMQ Televisión, Unión Radio Televisión and Telemundo. The Revolution completely changed the landscape and organisation of Cuban television with the creation in 1961 of the ICRT, Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión (Cuban Institute of Radio and Television).

As a state-run body, the ICRT's purpose is to supervise and regulate radio and television activities in Cuba. It controls the production, broadcasting, and management of national audiovisual content. Since then, the Communist Party has used television for propaganda purposes, but also to educate the people. It is partly due to this latter point that Cuba now has a high literacy rate among its population.

Television channels

The Cuban government, as demonstrated by the creation of the ICRT in 1962, pays close attention to the control of information, over which it maintains complete control. The Ministry of Communication has increased the number of its broadcasting channels, which now amount to 11. Moreover, each region has its own channel, bringing the total to 16 regional channels.

However, Cuban television is going through a period of transition on the technical front. While the majority of Cubans still receive their programs in analog format, new boxes called *cajitas* provide access to digital television, offering better quality and access to more channels. However, the stock of *cajitas* is regularly depleted, driving up their price, which can reach up to 10 to 12 thousand Cuban pesos, equivalent to 4 times the average salary. Only affluent Cuban families, or those benefiting from financial assistance from family members abroad, can afford to buy these *cajitas*.

Cubavisión is the ICRT's historic and main channel. It broadcasts a wide variety of programs, including political debates, newsletters, game shows, telenovelas, Cuban and American series, cartoons, etc. The ICRT describes it as a family channel. It is also through this channel that the government expresses itself. With its terrestrial channel, Cubavisión is accessible throughout the country, providing the government a privileged means of communicating with the people.



Cubavisión International broadcasts non-stop every day of the year. As its name suggests, it broadcasts all over the world, enabling Cuban news to be transmitted beyond its borders, which is why some programs are subtitled. Although there is some international news, the channel focuses on broadcasting Cuban content and news. Until recently, it was available via Canal+, but this is no longer the case. It can still be accessed online via the ICRT website. It is the only Cuban channel broadcast outside the country.

Canal Educativo and **Canal Educativo 2** are the two educational channels. They offer Cubans the chance to learn through a range of programmes for all ages. These programs cover topics such as history, literature, music, etc. in a variety of forms, such as educational series, children's programs, documentaries and discussions. One unique aspect of these channels is that they also broadcast classes used as teaching materials in schools.

Canal Caribe de Noticias is a news channel, although it also broadcasts cultural programs. The channel broadcasts exclusively within the territory. It also has a YouTube channel where it uploads extracts from its programs.

Tele Rebelde is a sports channel that broadcasts 15 hours a day. It offers diverse programming and covers major Cuban and international sporting events.

Canal Clave specializes in music, mainly Cuban but also international. It also covers events such as concerts and festivals.

Canal Habana is the capital's channel and covers all the news related to it.

Multivision covers about 50% of the country. It can be considered to be the channel most geared towards broadcasting Cuban cultural programmes.

There are two non-Cuban channels. However, their content is still controlled by the State.



Telesur was created in 2005 by Venezuela, along with Argentina, Uruguay and Cuba. It is broadcast worldwide and aims to put Latin America at the forefront by providing a Latin American perspective on political, national and international issues, through news programmes and debates. Mainly broadcast during the daytime, its Cuban programming is controlled. The program highlighting Latin America in the world, "The Best of Telesur", is produced by ICRT.

Russia Today is Russia's international channel, created in 2005. It gives the Russian point of view on news from the country and around the world. The channel stands in opposition to the world's mainstream media.

Funding and rights

As Cuban television channels are public, their main source of funding comes from the State, which provides them an annual budget that is redefined at the beginning of each year. In addition to their own productions, the channels broadcast projects by independent Cuban producers and directors. These programmes are broadcast on regional channels and on the national channels Cubavisión and Multivision. Despite this, television channels rarely buy programmes, and if they do, they only pay a guaranteed minimum for a certain number of hours of content. However, the channels do help in other ways, by subcontracting material to independent producers. In most cases, Cuban projects are not financed by the channels themselves but by the State, which remunerates the producers and directors directly.

However, these salaries are extremely low, forcing them to find other sources of income and other jobs in order to survive. Producers don't receive any income from their films, as the money goes directly to the Ministry of Communication, except in the case of a coproduction with a foreign channel and where there is an agreement stipulating that the director must be paid. Cubavision internacional has recently started earning revenues from advertising, but this source of income remains limited.

Programs from other countries can be broadcast through bilateral agreements with those countries. United States content, on the other hand, is broadcast without any agreement or purchase of rights, which explains why Cubans quickly have access to American films, directly broadcast on television after their screening. The same applies to US TV programmes. But this disregard to respect rights can also apply to Cuban works, which are broadcast without the agreement of the producer and director, as shown by the case of La Habana De Fito.

DISTRIBUTION AND EXHIBITION

Distribution

Before 1959, US companies dominated the film distribution market in Cuba, and also controlled the country's main cinemas. Around 70% of the films shown in Cuba came from the United States, with a significant presence of Spanish, Mexican, Argentinean, French, Italian and British productions. According to the journalist Ignacio Ramonet, local production before 1959 was artistically poor, focusing mainly on folklore.

The few remaining cinemas in Cuba - most of which are located in Havana - are now facing immense competition from illegal streaming platforms and DVDs. It should be noted that, although this is no longer the case, during the first few weeks of the films theatrical release, screenings were initially reserved almost exclusively for cinema professionals and students.

Film distribution in Cuba remains influenced by the legacy of the Revolution and the ideals of cinema as an art form serving revolutionary ideas. As a result, the Cuban government has put in place a number of rules that must be complied with if a film is to be shown in cinemas.

In order for a film, including a Franco-Cuban film, to be shown in Cuba, it must first be presented to the ICAIC and given the green light. To these restrictions must be added the lack of screens and cinemas, which further limit the possibilities of showing films. These various obstacles to distribution mean that there are very few Cuban films as such, meaning that most of them are often made by Cuban filmmakers living abroad in Spain, the United States or Latin American countries, or films shot in Cuba but produced, distributed and sold internationally via networks and funding outside Cuba. In the case of films produced and shot in Cuba, it can take many years for them to finally be seen by an international audience, not least because of the pressure exerted by the government itself. As a result, the many films dealing with social issues, which may display a form of criticism of the Cuban regime, sometimes barely concealed, are exposed to potential censorship.

It is mainly through festivals that certain films manage to achieve wide international distribution. Festivals continue to play a significant role in the distribution strategies of Cuban films and international films hoping to be seen in Cuba. Events such as the Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana continue to play an essential role in promoting Cuban cinema on the international scene. These festivals are a privileged means of finding international funding, particularly for young filmmakers. This is not a new phenomenon. *Fresa y Chocolate* (Strawberry and Chocolate, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, 1993) gained international exposure after being in official competition at Cannes and winning the Jury Prize at the Berlinale in 1994 (there is also a certain international curiosity about works by Cuban filmmakers, as evidenced by the many websites that list all films from Cuba or by Cuban directors). Also, even if national festivals allow Cuban filmmakers some freedom, this remains very limited due to the government's still strong control over the culture and cinema sector.

Following in the footsteps of the festivals, international co-production offers Cuban filmmakers another way of accessing a wider audience, better funding and, above all, the hope of finding an international sales agent more easily (although there are also international sales companies that have decided to support Cuban cinema in a conscious manner. This is notably the case of Alfredo Calvino with his company Habanero). Finally, online streaming platforms represent an emerging avenue...

The globalisation of the Internet in Cuba - thanks to the deployment of 4G - marks a turning point in the distribution and promotion of Cuban films. Renowned festivals such as Havana's International Festival of New Latin American Cinema have set up online submission platforms, enabling Cuban filmmakers to easily upload their films without having to resort to physical copies. Some international festivals even offer online sections for screening selected films, such as the Gibara International Film Festival. This approach enables Cuban filmmakers to reach a worldwide audience without having to travel physically.

On the other hand, companies such as the Joven Club de Computación y Electrónica, which operates computer centres throughout the country, organise various types of educational activities, as well as screenings of Cuban films - in agreement with the ICAIC - helping to promote national film production within communities and encourage participation in the local cultural scene.

Social networks, meanwhile, play a key role in promoting films and festivals. Announcements on platforms such as Facebook, Telegram and Twitter reach a wider audience, encouraging local filmmakers to submit their work. In addition to this, these channels also facilitate communication between organisers, filmmakers and the Cuban film community, enabling direct contact to be maintained with participants, providing updates on selections, sharing information about events, giving practical advice and so on.

The issues surrounding these new tools were also at the heart of the debates at the professional meetings of the 17th edition of the Gibara 2023 International Film Festival. On this occasion, Reymel Delgado emphasised the importance of cinema screens, despite the emergence of new ways of watching films by streaming, insisting that films that go through the cinema circuit first have better results later on. At the same time, EICTV students expressed the need for more dialogues such as this, stressing that the marketing and screening of a film are often forgotten in the creative process.

Gibara International Film Festival Professional Meetings, 17th edition, 2023 :

Daniel Ross shared his insights into the world of distribution and budget management, highlighting the need to understand and adapt to the mechanisms of the film industry in order to make a film independently. He also stressed the crucial role of festivals, not only in giving films visibility, but also in generating funding.

Reymel Delgado, also a producer at i4Films, spoke about operational difficulties, access to festivals and the challenges of distribution. He emphasised how distribution can condition the type of production, sometimes making it more difficult to disseminate social issues of national interest on an international scale.

"Distribution conditions the type of production; it acts as a limiting factor. It is much more difficult to distribute social issues of national interest in international arenas. Making irreverent films can make distribution more difficult. It's increasingly difficult to make honest films".

Reymel Delgado, at the professional meetings of the 17th Gibara International Film Festival 2023.

CUBAN CINEMAS

Cuba has long been a holy place for cinemas. There were 487 cinemas in 1945, including 118 in Havana, and 519 cinemas in 1958 for a population of 7 million. In 2009, there were still over 250 cinemas. However, as a result of successive economic crises, the US embargo and lack of maintenance, Cuba has gradually lost its number of cinemas. Today, there are only seven cinemas in La Havana, four of which are on the same avenue: **La Rampa, Charles Chaplin, 23 y 12 and Yara, Acapulco, Riviera and the Multicine Infanta**. There are often untimely closures due to technical problems. There are still a few cinemas in the provinces, such as Santiago de Cuba, but they are rare.



Portal del ciudadano de la Habana - Tomado de Radio Reloj Edition : MSCG





23 y 12 ©Ciné 23 y 12, cinematek of Cuba 2015



YARA

The French Embassy is responsible for programming at La Rampa thanks to a tripartite agreement with the CNC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the ICAIC in 2016, which enabled the digitization of the cinema. Since 2020, the embassy has been in charge of programming the French, French-speaking and European movies with films supplied by the French Institute catalog (where the rights are acquired for the entire French cultural network abroad). The embassy also programmes all the festivals in which France participates (French-speaking film festival, European film festival, French film festival). Following a closure for renovation in 2023, the French Embassy and the ICAIC are in discussion about this agreement and future programming.

The Cinematheque de Cuba programmes cinema 23 y 12, where you can find classic and heritage films. The Cinematheque has a large collection of copies of classic Cuban and international films, but these are often of poor quality and copyright-free. Its main role is to preserve, curate and distribute this film heritage. The Cinematheque depends on the ICAIC and must inform it of its programming, although it has greater autonomy than the other cinemas belonging directly to the ICAIC.

Programming in Cuban cinemas is really different as in Europe. The programming is linear, and films change randomly from one day to the next. They are only shown for a short time, sometimes for three days, a week at the most. There are also often one-off screenings, and all are subject to the fluctuation of Cuban life (power cuts or reduced energy quotas) as well as last-minute cancellations and last minutes changes. Screenings are limited to one or two per day, in the evening or late afternoon. For Cuban films whose directors are recognized and accepted in Cuba, there is a premiere in the presence of the film team, but the film never stayed on screen long. Programming in Cuban cinemas is really different as in Europe. The programming is linear, and films change randomly from one day to the next. They are only shown for a short time, sometimes for three days, a week at the most. There are also often one-off screenings, and all are subject to the fluctuation of Cuban life (power cuts or reduced energy quotas) as well as last-minute cancellations and last minutes changes. Screenings are limited to one or two per day, in the evening or late afternoon. For Cuban films whose directors are recognized and accepted in Cuba, there is a premiere in the presence of the film team, but the film never stayed on screen long.

The programme is available in the magazine Cartelera Cine y Video. This magazine, available online on the ICAIC website, Facebook and Telegram, presents the programme of all the cinemas in La Havana as well as film reviews. Programming works in cycles. There is always a cycle for children with animation movies. The rest of the programme varies between country cycles organized by the Cinematheque in agreement with the embassies of the various countries (Spain, Serbia, etc.), according to current events and historical celebrations (Golden Globes films, Cuban Revolution Day, Beatles week) and filmmaker cycles. There are films of all nationalities, including Danish, French, American, Spanish, Mexican and Italian. Looking at the programming magazines, American films are the most represented. There are as many films from 2023 as from 2021. Most European films are programmed by the various embassies.

There are very few Cuban films, most of which are reruns of old films. Contemporary Cuban films are often shown in parallel with a festival (La Havana Festival, the cultural festival for Cubans living abroad). There is also large 3D programme every weekend. So far, we have not been able to find any statistical data on cinema admissions.

To recuperate these films and show them to the public, Cuban cinemas use pirated copies. Thanks to this state-run piracy, Cuban cinemas are able to show original Netflix films on the big screen, offer American films normally blocked by the embargo and avoid copyright issues. There is no budget for the purchase of screening rights for films. Apart from films programmed by embassies, which receive copies via distributors in Blu-ray, DCP or HD MP4 video files, ICAIC programming is pirated. Cuba enjoys great sympathy from many countries and distributors, who provide them with a large number of royalty-free films in the name of a historic friendship.

Cuban cinemas generally have just one screen, but with a very large capacity, sometimes exceeding 1,500 seats. Havana's Multicine Infanta is the only cinema with several screens. Nowadays, as well as showing films, the Infanta has become a cultural center where exhibitions, conferences and activities for families and children are organized.

The price of gas and transport has a major impact on cinema admissions, with cinemas only able to open at certain times. Cuban cinemas are ageing and projection conditions are poor. For example, colours can be red or green and the sound can only come out on one side, and the Dolby licence is in any case not available in Cuba... These obsolete screening conditions explain why audiences rarely go to cinemas, and why they struggle to develop new cinema-going habits.

Operating in Cuba does not generate any profits. Admission prices are highly regulated (10 Cuban pesos last summer, or €0.38, while the average Cuban salary in 2024 was 4,800 pesos, or €36.80). So, ticket sales do not even cover the theatre's operating costs, there is no climb back up from the box office.

Overall, Cuban cinemas are in decline. Initial initiatives have been taken to save cinemas and exhibition circuits. The cinemas are administered by the ICAIC, but there is an opening for the privatisation of cinemas. In 2023, El Centro Provincial de Cine de Camagüey opened an auction to sell the former Encanto cinema on Ignacio Agramonte street in Havana. To this end, an appeal has been launched to private investors to modernize the space and promote audiovisual culture in the region.



The Encanto cinema was home to El Circuito, a self-managed and self-financed project that had built a reputation for organising socio-cultural events, including the Camagüey International Video Art Festival (Fivac). Then, in November 2013, Raúl Castro's government banned the screening of films "in any type of independent activity". El Circuito, then considered to be one of the only means of promoting Cuban alternative art, can't host the festival anymore. In August 2023, the establishment announced its closure for "repairs and staff holidays", but Diana Rosa Pérez, director and founder of the project, subsequently declared the end of the El Circuito project.

The future of cinemas in Cuba therefore remains highly uncertain, and we will see if initiatives such as this call for applications launched by El Centro Provincial de Cine de Camagüey will be put in place to save the hundreds of other cinemas that have closed their doors in Cuba.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ALTERNATE CIRCUIT

As we mentioned earlier, censorship is very common in the Cuban film industry. Censorship can take various forms. Visas are sometimes withheld, preventing filmmakers from travelling and defending their films. Censorship can also consist in films being excluded, i.e. they are not screened in cinemas or on television, and filmmakers are not allowed to speak.

There is also less visible censorship, which consists of allowing projects to be made but not promoting them once they are released, as illustrated by the ban on screening the documentary *Havana de Fito* in an independent cultural space in the capital and its subsequent truncated broadcast on television. As 46-year-old filmmaker Miguel Coyula explains: "Broadcasting (the film) on television encourages piracy and ruins the life it could have at international festivals". He also explains that he shoots his films clandestinely to avoid police harassment. Faced with these practices of invisibilisation and in order to continue making his films, he screened his film *Coraz'on Azul* (2021) at home for two years. Miguel Coyula knew from the start that the frontal content of his film would be damaging. Although his film was shown at foreign festivals, it was ignored in Cuban cinemas.

Censorship can also interfere in festival selections, making projects considered problematic by the regime invisible. Take, for example, the film *Santa y Andrés* (*Santa and Andrés*, 2016) written and directed by Carlos Lechuga. Initially selected for the Havana Film Festival, it was subsequently withdrawn, leading to strong protests from Cuban filmmakers. In an interview with OnCubaNews, Lechuga says about his previous film *Melaza*:

"It all started when we presented Melaza at the Havana Film Festival, and some of the people in charge of the Film Institute at the time were annoyed, and with that came an attempt at censorship. At that time, we received several strange calls inviting us to make some changes to the film before the screenings."

The restrictions of the exhibition circuit and the censorship exercised over Cuban works have encouraged the emergence of an alternative cinema on the island, allowing local filmmakers such as Carlos Lechuga to express themselves:

"When we talk about independent cinema, we are referring to all those films that, in one way or another, are made outside the usual production circuits. [...] I think we can talk about independent cinema in Cuba. I've done all my work as a director independently and it hasn't been easy at all, but it's been worth it. Cuban independent cinema is a terminology used to talk about films that have emerged outside the ICAIC, the ICRT or any other state institution. For example, I'm very proud of the fact that none of my films have cost the Cuban state a cent. We live in a country in crisis and the money invested in a film is almost never retrieved, because film prices in Cuba are very cheap."

Kiki Álvarez is also a good example of the myriad of initiatives to ensure the survival of independent cinema. The Cuban director born in 1961, was in charge of the fiction course at the Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (EICTV) before recently resigning. He now devotes his time to managing the Oasis cinema, where he has set up an independent film club. This is a new space for the expression of dissident opinions and the screening of films that are not in line with the values defended by the regime. Kiki Álvarez also initiated *La Asamblea De Cineastas Cubanos*, an assembly whose purpose was to counter the 1959 law.

Embassies are also important dissident places, providing an opportunity to showcase Cuban independent cinema. The Norwegian embassy has set up a fund to support Cuban cinema and organises screenings. These events offer an opportunity to project feature films and, above all, short films criticising of the regime's policies. The Dutch embassy was also a propitious place for the promotion of Cuban cinema, although the recent rise to power of the extreme right could jeopardise Dutch support for the Cuban film industry.

The aforementioned difficulties have also encouraged the emergence of a major distribution circuit for audiovisual and cinematographic content, gathered in a single medium: *El paquete semanal*. This is a widespread practice on the island, making up for the limited access to information and entertainment. Indeed, since 1995, reception of foreign television channels in Cuba has only been authorised in hotels, certain diplomatic locations and the homes of government officials. In the face of these restrictions, a complex network of distributors compiles a vast quantity of digital content, films, TV series, music, games and applications, stored and transmitted from hard drive to hard drive, commonly known as "the package".

It has become a mass medium in its own right, it is an alternative to Cuba's ultra-controlled television and cinema. On one hand, it allows the sharing of recent content such as the latest American blockbusters or telenovelas. But it is also a major distribution medium for Cuban films that are difficult to screen locally because of the restrictions mentioned above.

This phenomenon has also gained in popularity due to government restrictions on Internet access and the poor connectivity in the country. In 2016, it was estimated that five million Cubans, almost half the total population, purchased the *paquete semanal*.

The spreading of this compilation is facilitated by the *paqueteros*, the people responsible for sharing the *paquete*. To do this, they use portable hard drives, USB sticks or even DVDs to transfer the content to local contact points, themselves acting as intermediaries between the *paquetero* and the end user. A *paquetero* can, for example, buy the pack for two dollars. Then, he can sell it back to the final customer for one dollar, or even two if he wants to buy the contents earlier. These people create an informal but organised network, at the heart of the distribution of audiovisual and cinematographic content across the country.



Crédit : Lisette Poole

Stage 1. Some Individuals record and download content via satellites and software. Music promoters copy Cuban music recorded in independent studios.

Stage 2. "Parent companies" organise the files they receive from promoters and people who have recorded audiovisual content and then sell them.

Stage 3. The first buyers acquire the content sold by the parent companies and resell it.

Stage 4. Second buyers acquire the package and mix it with other packages from different parent companies.

Stage 5. Carriers collect the packages from the second buyers and distribute them to final customers.

Stage 6. Final customers buy the package and watch it on their television or computer.

CONCLUSION

The challenge is to find a balance between preserving Cuban cultural identity and the need to adapt to a constantly changing media and technological environment.

Structural and ideological issues go well beyond the immediate challenges posed by the pandemic or economic difficulties. In the Cuban audiovisual and film industries, these issues are reflected by freedom of expression and access to culture and also in the difficulties of financing projects. At the same time, the communication and digital technologies have been considerably developed over the last years and continue to gain in performance on the island.

There is an urgent need for a renewed film law, as requested by the Asamblea de Cineastas Cubanos, which would respond to the immediate needs of the film industry and would also address the wider challenges facing Cuban culture today; with greater freedoms in the system of financing, production, distribution and exhibition, as well as a genuine dialogue between filmmakers and the ICAIC with the aim of establishing a relationship of collaboration rather than limitation.

With those kind of changes, we could have a co-production agreement between the CNC and the ICAIC , which would facilitate co-productions between the two countries, in particular by having the CNC's agreement (be consider as a French movie) and have access to the CNC grants. This co-production agreement would add to the many cultural and institutional links that already exist between France and Cuba, the numerous co-productions that already exist and the joint activity of the embassy and the Ministry of Culture in Cuba proves it.

“

Dondequiera que exista un cineasta cubano, ahí también estará la imagen, la historia, el dolor, la angustia o la felicidad de un país y su gente, porque hay experiencias que deben ser contadas, compartidas. Es lo que conforma una identidad. Por eso hacemos cine, para encontrar a Cuba.”

(Wherever there is a Cuban filmmaker, there is also the image, the story, the pain, the anguish or the happiness of a country and its people, because there are experiences that must be told, shared. That's identity. That's why we make films, to find Cuba).

Extract from Boletín 0 de la Asamblea de Cineastas Cubanos

”

APPENDIX

5

HOW TO COPRODUCE WITH CUBA

List of international funds

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1m9DPG5fHHTJbpcQhDWW2KYJ9fwgKBpK4BrbQmlfKBS0/edit?usp=sharing>

Non-exhaustive list Cuban producers and French co-producers

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JdOx3Lya8cSPjO6Cbp2PRoAiLQ2kzbyC/view?usp=share_link

DISTRIBUTION

Transcription of the *Asamblea*

“How many films do we produce each year? How many of these films actually reach our audiences? What is the real impact of censorship and exclusion in today's media and technological context? Can we fight against "cultural colonization" without promoting the films we make? How many compatriots in the 21st century have never been able to see a film in a properly equipped cinema? What can be done to recover and generate these spaces of such importance to national culture? How can we understand the *raison d'être* of our art education system, including our film schools, if a misguided cultural policy ends up causing the exodus of most of its graduates? How is it possible for the media to refer to the achievements of our culture without resolutely tackling the serious problems that affect it? How much longer will propaganda be more important than facts?”

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CO PRODUCING WITH CUBA

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MASTER'S DEGREE PRESENTATION

The Master 2 in Cinema and Audiovisual Production at Université Paul-Valéry Montpellier 3 trains cultural entrepreneurs in the moving image sector, including cinema, audiovisual and interactive productions. The program aims to provide practical skills in the technical, artistic, legal and financial aspects of production. International exposure is a strong point, with presentations by professionals and a seminar dedicated to European co-production, in collaboration with the Cinemed festival in Montpellier and the Cinélatino festival in Toulouse. Theoretical teaching takes place from September to March, enriched by the expertise of industry professionals, followed by a four- to six-month internship between April and September. The Master's program is co-directed by Vincent Deville, senior lecturer in cinema, and Serge Lalou, producer at Films d'Ici in Paris and Films d'Ici Méditerranée in Montpellier.

<https://m2prod-montpellier.fr>

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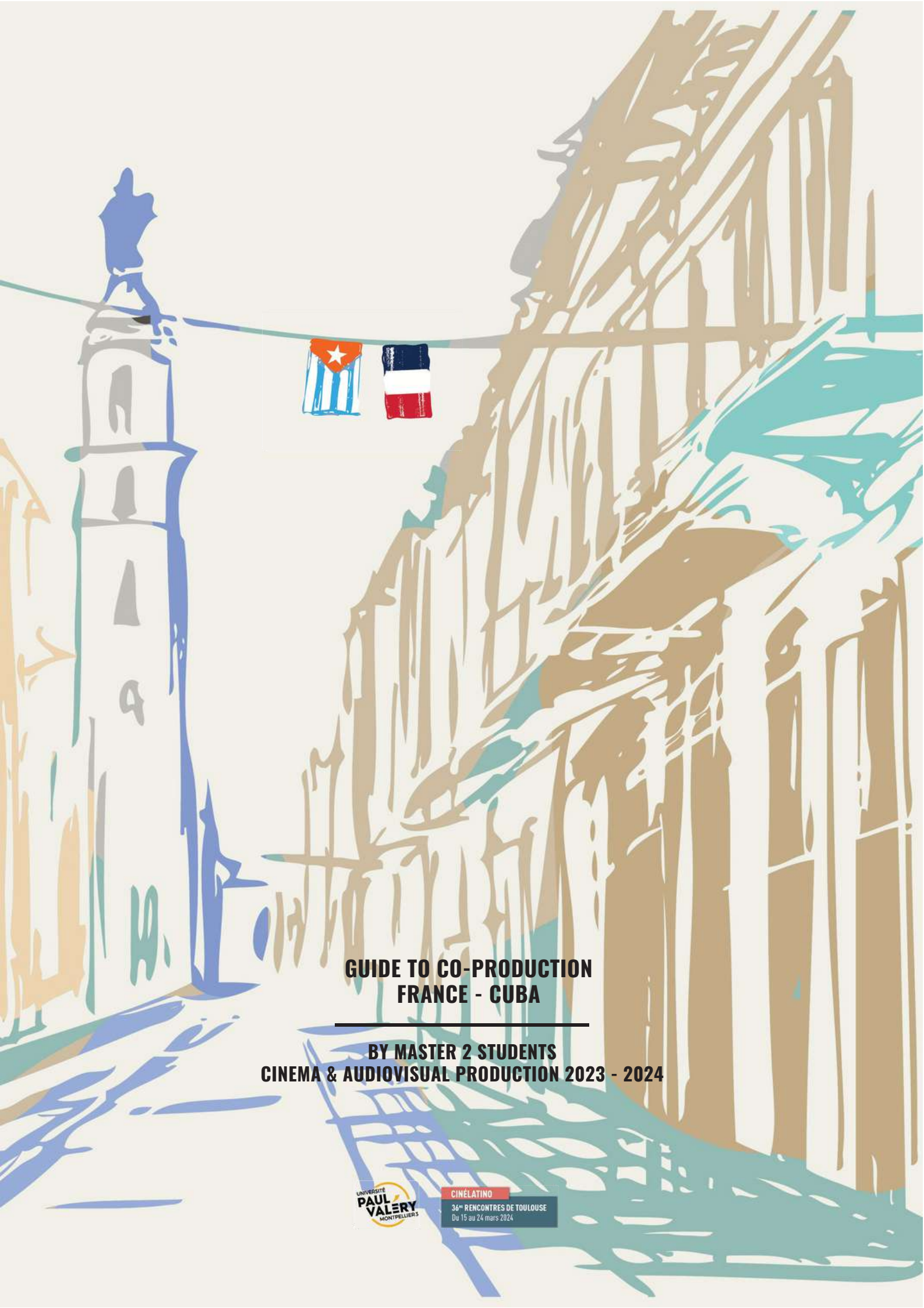
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